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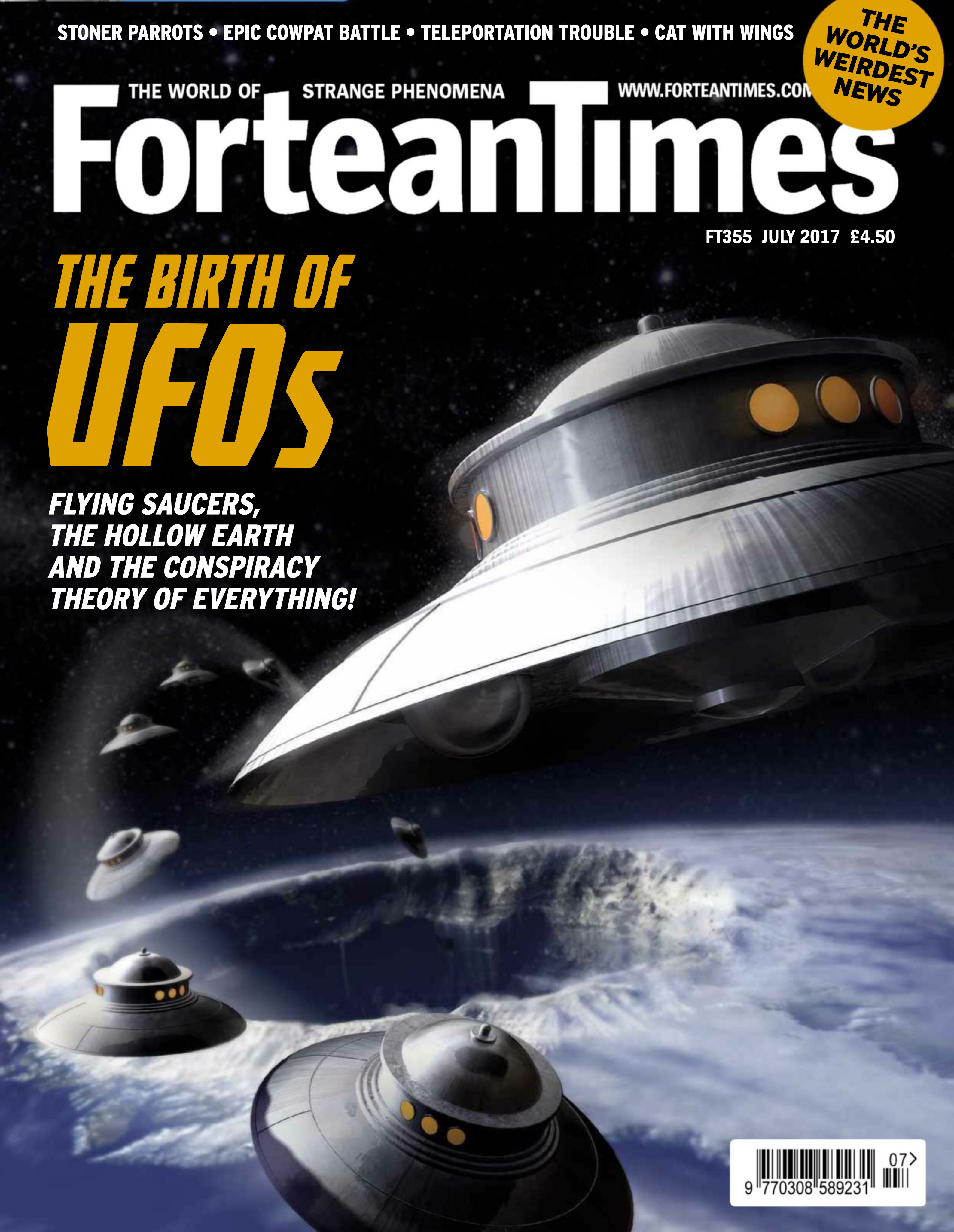

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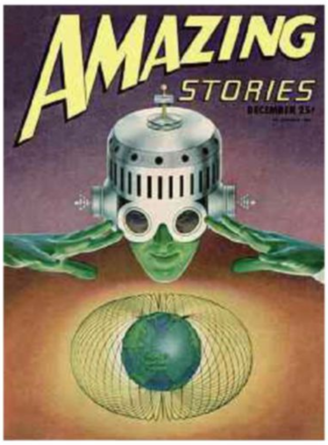

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NATALIA KOLESNIKOVA/AFP/GETTY IMAGES

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ForteanTimes
THE BIRTH OF
UFOs

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Why fortean ?

Everything you always wanted to know about *Fortean Times* but were too paranoid to ask!

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KENNETH ARNOLD: MARY EVANS PICTURE LIBRARY / ALAMY STOCK PHOTOS

ALL HEADER ICONS THROUGHOUT THE MAGAZINE BY CAPUCINE DESLOUIS

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EDITORIAL

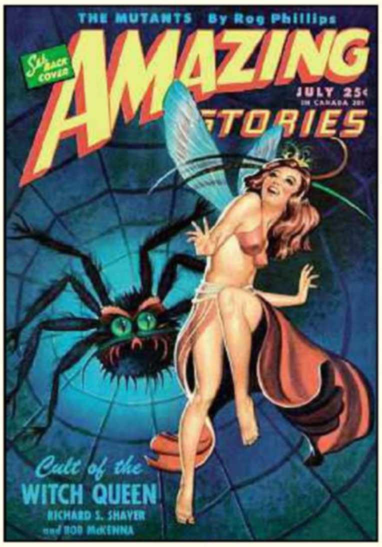
CAPUCINE DESLOUIS

SAUCERS AND SMEARS

IT WAS 70 YEARS AGO TODAY...

...well, 24 June 1947 to be precise – that Kenneth Arnold made what was probably the most influential UFO sighting of all time: it launched the modern UFO age, gave us the phrase 'flying saucer', created a pervasive visual and cultural icon, and delineated the contours of a modern mythology that fascinated the world through the second half of the 20th century and beyond.

Back in 2000 we ran an article by James Easton (**FT137:34-39**) suggesting that what Arnold saw that fateful day as he flew over Washington State's Cascade Mountains was a flock of birds – specifically, American white pelicans – in flight. As we expected, it ruffled – if you'll pardon the expression – more than a few feathers amongst the UFO community, which was perhaps both more sizeable and more engaged then than it is today. 'Pelicanist' (coined by Jerome Clark) became, for a while, a favoured term of abuse directed toward those who used such mundane explanations to 'debunk' UFO sightings (though it was worn as a badge of honour by *Magonia* magazine). *FT* received much criticism from the anti-Pelicanist faction, with those of a more paranoid bent believing the Pelicanist position to be part of a deliberate state cover-up of the 'truth' behind the UFO mystery. Our own UFO correspondents were, it was said, in the employ of MI5 or other shadowy bodies bent on spreading lies and misinformation about our vistors from space. In the millennial, post *X-Files* landscape of the time, ufology, conspiracy and the bizarre fantasies of David Icke and others were becoming inextricably entagled.



But this strange, down-the-rabbit-hole quality of ufology – a bricolage of unconventional beliefs and pop cultural memes – has been present in the subject since its very beginnings. As we mark the 70th anniversary of the Arnold sighting in this issue (see pp29, 46-49), we also examine the numerous ways in which this landmark ufological case was enmeshed from the start in a nexus of conspiracy theory, pulp fiction, fortean speculation and outright fantasies and fibs. Whether we're talking about Fred Lee Crisman – a bizarre figure who somehow links Kenneth Arnold to JFK, via Maury Island (pp32-39) – or SF magazine editors Ray Palmer and John W Campbell (pp40-45) – whose publishing ventures combined (and possibly confused) science fiction with fringe beliefs and forteana – it is clear that the UFO mystery has always been part of a wider, richer vein of weirdness, both influenced by and influencing the 'real-life' Hollow Earth mythos of Richard Shaver or the SF theology of L Ron Hubbard (see pp50-52).

Ufologists of the nuts-and-bolts variety may lament the increasing prevalence of the psychosocial school, but the early origins of the subject, and its simultaneous entanglement in the popular culture of the time, suggest that if there ever really was a 'pure', pre-Pelicanist ufology, we've surely not seen it in our lifetime.

ERRATA

FT352:26: Pete Swindells of Wolverhampton points out that, despite what was claimed in the UFO Files story 'Surprising Silence', TRAPPIST-1 is 'only' some 40 light-years away, not 40 million.

FT352:28: The missing back reference concerning the switch from the Julian to the Gregorian calendar should have been: **FT349:38-41**.

DAVID R SUTTON

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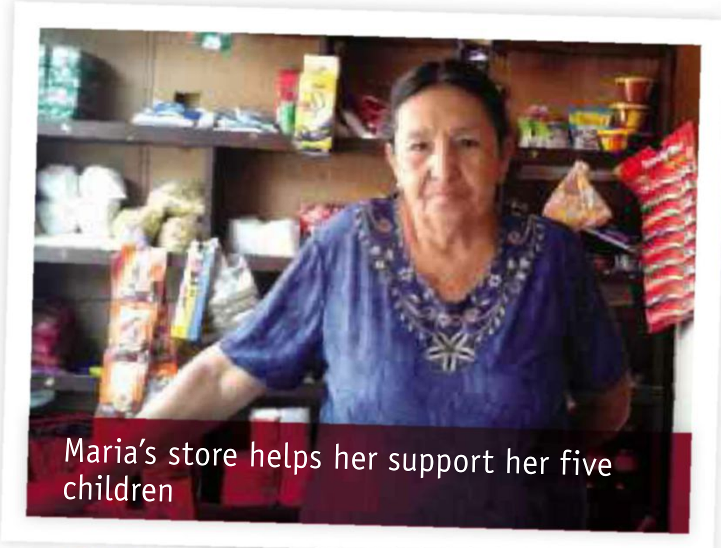
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STRANGE DAYS

HURTLING HEIFERS AND FLYING DUNG

A bizarre bovine mystery in Switzerland and a mythical cowpat combat re-enacted in India

CATERS NEWS

FABRICE COFFRINI / AFP / GETTY IMAGES

LEFT: The villagers of Kairuppala enter the fray. **BELOW**: Hérens cows often compete in organised cow-fighting.

OVER THE EDGE

On the night of 24 May, 13 Hérens cows broke out of their pen, ran across pasture and either fell or threw themselves off a 50m (164ft) cliff near the Swiss village of Levron. Twelve of them died, while the 13th survived – probably because it landed on the others – but was injured and taken to an animal hospital in Bern. "The cows broke through several lines around the pasture before finding themselves on the ridge," said Norbert Terrettaz, president of a farming insurance company in the region. "They fell into the void, as though they were forced into it."

In total the cows were thought to be worth 20,000 francs. They belonged to several owners but were all grazing on land belonging to a local couple, who said they thought some kind of predator must have chased the beasts off the cliff. Nevertheless, their behaviour was unusual. "Cows don't follow each other like sheep, when they are scared they have a tendency to disperse," said Terrettaz.

To add to the mystery, before reaching the cliff the fleeing cows had to pass through a pasture occupied by four yaks, none of which had injuries consistent with a predator. If a wolf or lynx was pursuing the cows, it's unlikely it would have been uninterested in the yaks.

> *The fleeing cows had to pass through a pasture occupied by four yaks*

The Hérens (or Eringer in German) cow is a traditional breed in the Swiss canton of Valais whose ancestors existed in the Rhône valley region as far back as 3,000 BC. Naturally combative, the cows often fight to establish the leader of the herd, behaviour that has led to organised cow-fighting competitions in the area. *The Local (Switzerland), 31 May 2017.*

EPIC DUNG BATTLE

Every year, the people of Kairuppala, a village in India's Andhra Pradesh state, engage in an epic cow dung cake battle that often leaves dozens injured. They believe the tradition brings them good health and prosperity. Legend has it that Lord Veerabhadra Swamy, a fearsome form of the Hindu god Shiva, and the Goddess Bhadrakhali fell in love and decided to marry. In order to tease his beloved, Veerabhadra Swamy declared that he did not want to marry anymore, which enraged Bhadrakhali and her clansmen, who decided to teach the deceitful groom a lesson by beating him with cow dung cakes. The other side retaliated, but the bizarre battle ended in compromise and the much awaited celestial wedding. Today, the devotees of Kairuppala village celebrate their union by re-enacting their mythical battle using the same unconventional weapons. *odditycentral.com, 18 April 2107.*

AVIAN ADDICTS

Stoner parrots decimate India's opium crop

PAGE 08

TWINKLE TOES

Puzzling polydactyly in Pueblo Bonito

PAGE 16

PILOT CLOSE ENCOUNTERS

The view from Kenneth Arnold's cockpit

PAGE 29

THE CONSPIRASPHERE

NOEL ROONEY notes that the recent terror attacks in London and Manchester provoked a familiar – and disturbingly swift – response from the Conspirasphere...

RAPID RESPONSE

The UK has, in recent times, become a principal target for terrorism; the attacks in London and Manchester have brought death, injury and mass panic, and my heart goes out to those whose lives have been lost or ruined. The attacks themselves, it transpires, are also targets: targets for the false flag meme that has become the standard Conspirasphere response to incidents of this kind.

A recently published research paper from the University of Washington has some interesting things to say about this response pattern. Kate Starbird and her team investigate the 'alternative media ecosystem' using domain network mapping (based on Twitter responses) in an attempt to understand the ultimate provenance, as well as the web of connections between, the false flag/crisis actor/hoax memes generated in the wake of terror attacks. The findings of the research paint an intriguing picture: denizens of the Conspirasphere appear to be waiting for these events; the response is pretty immediate (regularly within an hour of the news breaking); and there are some groups and websites that play an active part in galvanising other 'citizen journalists' and 'researchers' into scrutinising the media for inconsistencies. Starbird's research identifies a few websites that use Twitter bots to disseminate 'hoax' responses into the fervid post-attack æther: the online service industry known as 'just putting it out there'.

Inconsistencies are easy to find, of course; in the immediate aftermath of an attack, the mainstream media are often as confused and panicked as the eyewitnesses they seek out. For instance, after the London Bridge attack, a stabbing incident in Vauxhall, actually unrelated and criminal rather than terrorist, was part of the storyline for several hours. Eyewitnesses regularly make inaccurate claims about the number of perpetrators, and grow the story into a legendary vehicle; it is often 12 hours or more before a relatively coherent picture emerges, one that relies more on the facts than the exaggerated responses of terrified onlookers.

It is on this confusion of legends that the conspiracy theorists feed. That, and a weirdly naïve faith in the veracity of photographic records, or hastily shot smartphone videos of poor quality; from these essentially legendary resources, the alternative narrative is born. A tangential resemblance between faces in blurred images is grist for the 'crisis actor' meme; out of context images of bloodstains, or the lack of them, spark hoax theories; then, in the aftermath, hazy stories about security services being (at some ill-defined point) aware of the activities of the perpetrators generates false flag certainties.

In an ill-starred occurrence of propinquity, I read the Starbird paper less than an hour before news of the Manchester bombing came through. I decided to wait for two hours and then check if any false flag videos or articles (as opposed to simple tweets) had appeared online; I wagered that some pioneers would be capable of getting stuff out by then. In the event, two hours was way too slow an estimate on my part; within an hour, there were YouTube videos on the atrocity. It struck me, as I dredged the Internet for examples, that the responses are actually of two distinct types: first, the knee-jerk mantras of the automatic dissidents; second, and more subtly, the teasers – posts that don't explicitly say 'false flag' but pose questions designed to elicit such a response. These teasers are the catalysts of the Conspirasphere; they provoke scrutiny of haphazard, legendary material for evidence to fit the alternative narrative and provide the virtual scaffolding on which the edifices of contemporary conspiracy theory are often built.

https://faculty.washington.edu/kstarbi/Alt_Narratives_ICWSM17-CameraReady.pdf

EXTRA! EXTRA!

FT'S FAVOURITE HEADLINES FROM AROUND THE WORLD

DOCTOR WHO MISTOOK ANKLE FOR ELBOW WAS OFFERED FULL-TIME JOB

Irish Independent, 30 Jan 2016.

……

Skeleton headbutted man in fight

Rutland & Stamford Mercury, 19 Feb 2016.

……

CAR DISCOVERED IN ROAD

North Devon Journal, 17 Mar 2016.

……

Irish fossil explains how dogs became man's best friend

Irish Times, 3 June 2016.

……

WATCHING PAINT DRY ENTHUSES SCIENTISTS

D.Telegraph, 19 Mar 2016.

HOLY BONES GO EAST

For the first time in nearly a millennium, relics of St Nicholas have been allowed to leave Italy to be venerated by the Russian Orthodox Church. The supposed remains of the saint have been kept in Bari in southern Italy since 1087, when they were stolen from Myra in Asia Minor (now Turkey). Encased in a specially made golden ark, a 4in (10cm) piece of rib arrived in Moscow on 21 May. The relic was to be moved to St Petersburg in June before being returned to Bari in late July. The decision to allow the relic to leave Italy was the result of an historic encounter between Pope Francis and Patriarch Kirill, the head of the Russian Orthodox Church, in Cuba last year. The Orthodox and Roman Churches split in 1054 and have been riven by mistrust and suspicion ever since. *D.Telegraph, 23 May 2017.* For more saintly news, see pp22-23.

PHOTOGRAPH: VALERY SHARIFULIN\
TASS VIA GETTY IMAGES

SIDELINES...

SAY IT WITH DOG

Howard Van Sweringen, 41, followed Kristina Fuller after she dropped off her child at school in Lakeland, Florida. When her car stopped at a traffic light, he got out carrying his dog and threw it through her car window. After being arrested, he told police he did it because he thought she was "pretty" and wanted to talk to her. *metro.co.uk, 15 Feb 2017.*

NOMINATIVE DETERMINISM

A 38-year-old PE teacher was struck off after pestering a teenage girl for sex and "twanging her thong" when she was climbing a wall. His name? David Newton-Badman. *D.Mail, 20 April 2017*.

DEPP'S ORDEAL

Talking to a group of reporters in Tokyo last February, the actor Johnny Depp said: "I was attacked yesterday morning by a very rarely seen or experienced animal called 'chupacabra'. I fought with it for hours. They're very persistent, very mean. And I'm pretty sure it came into my suitcase. I threw him off the 23rd floor. So we'll never see him again. Thank you for understanding." El Chupacabras is a reptilian cryptid that allegedly sucks the blood from livestock. *inquisitr.com, 13 Feb 2017.*

AUTOGRAPHS

PARROT TALES

Stoner parakeets, beer-and-footie-loving macaw and dog-poisoning African grey

JAYDALAL5 / CREATIVE COMMONS

TOP: Parakeets in India have been raiding poppy fields and stealing up to 10 per cent of crops for their personal use.

- Parrots flying high are annoying farmers by plundering their poppy fields to feed their opiate addiction. The avian stoners sit perched in waiting until workers slit open the flower pods to help them ripen. They then swoop down in silence – having learned not to squawk – and nibble through the stalks below the pods before they are spotted. Video shows them retreating to high branches where they gorge on the plants leaving them sleeping for hours – and sometimes falling to their death.

In 2015 poppy-raiding parrots were reported in Chittorgarh in the state of Rajasthan, but this year they have been found making a huge dent in crops 40 miles (64km) away in Neemach in the state of Madhya Pradesh. The numbers of birds raiding the fields are increasing with every passing year. Farmers are supposed to hand over a pre-agreed quantity of produce to the state, which controls opium farming. The birds hit between March and April when the seeds are cut, exposing the latex which contains morphine. Blissed-out birds have become easy target for their predators. Farmers have tried bursting firecrackers, beating tin drums and hurling stones to keep the birds away – but to no avail.

Sobharam Rathod, an opium farmer from Neemach, estimates parrots are stealing around 10 per cent of his crop and he has been given a warning. "Usually, the parrots would make sound when in a group," he said. "But these birds have become so smart that they don't make any noise when they swoop on the fields. They start chirping when they fly away with opium pods. We have tried every trick possible to keep them at bay but they keep coming back even at the risk of their life. We keep an eye on them, but they also keep an eye on us. The moment you lower your guard the army of parrots silently swoop onto your field and take away the bulbs." From the video evidence, the birds would appear to relatives of the ring-necked (or rose-ringed) parakeets that have now established sizeable colonies in London and the Home Counties (see **FT258:23**). *D.Mirror, 22 Mar 2017.*

- Ignazio Frailis, 46, from Capoterra, Sardinia, allegedly stabbed his next-door neighbour Maria Bonaria Contu, 60, as she took a walk with friends. It is claimed he stabbed her 11 times and wounded a friend of hers who tried to defend her. Investigators believe unemployed Frailis decided to kill Mrs Contu, a mother of two, because she had coached her parrot to make disparaging remarks about him. Whenever he passed her property, the bird would hurl abuse at him. As the months passed, it became an obsession with him. Arresting officer Eugenio Fatone said that Frailis had previously complained about the parrot. He said: "Officers had tried to talk to both sides and had suggested putting the parrot in a different room, not facing Mr Frailis's house. Sadly, Mrs Contu didn't take our advice." *L'Unione Sarda, Heatstreet, 4 May 2017.*

- When Helen Finch from Nutley in East Sussex went out for the day, her pet parrot, a Congo African grey called Peaches, inadvertently poisoned her three dogs, Maltese terriers Boris and Cassidy and shi tzu-pug cross Gus. On her return Mrs Finch noted the dogs were

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ABOVE: Peaches the African grey lured Boris, Cassidy and Gus with poisonous grapes – inadvertently, or with murder in mind?

unwell and spotted that a bunch of grapes was missing from the fruit bowl. Knowing that the fruit can cause acute renal failure, she rushed her pets to the vet. "Peaches flies freely around the house, but returns to her cage when I'm not at home," she said. "She's a fantastic mimic and she must have called each dog over by name to be fed and then dropped the grapes in front of them from her cage. Boris, Cassidy and Gus then tucked into their illicit meal."

Grapes along with chocolate, raisins and currants can cause diarrhoea and vomiting in dogs, which can then lead to kidney failure. The dogs were given activated charcoal, to stop their bodies absorbing toxins, and put on intravenous drips to clear their kidneys. They had to stay at the vet's surgery for two days to recover. Grapes are now banned from the house. *D.Mail, 8 April 2017.*

- Luis Santana, 32, from Connecticut was in a fight when a policeman arrived on the scene. A shirtless Santana then threw a white parrot he was holding at the policeman, and the startled bird bit his finger. Santana ran away, but was apprehended at a house nearby. The parrot turned out to be stolen and was reunited with its owner the following day. *NBC Connecticut, 21 Mar 2017.*

- Mike Long, 53, has his own bottle-opener in the shape of his pet macaw, Rocco. The bird uses his beak to crack open a beer for him when watching football with his mates in Urmston, Greater Manchester. Rocco is such a 'lad', said Mr Long, that he had even been to the pub. *Metro, 28 Feb 2017.*

- For more parrot tales, see **FT285:9, 316:22-23, 321:23, 344:11**.

BEN FURST / MERCURY PRESS

TOP: Mike Long and Rocco crack open a cold one. The South American blue-and-yellow macaw also enjoys watching football.

SIDELINES...

PLUMMETING SNAKE

A large red-bellied black snake seemingly fell from the sky on Flinder Street in Adelaide, South Australia, on 20 December. It landed on a footpath next to a multi-storey car park from which it had plunged, and was killed on impact. It was thought to have hitched a car ride from the River Torrens as a stowaway. It was observed sunbathing on the ninth floor when a pigeon startled it, and it lost its balance and fell. *Adelaide Advertiser, 22 Dec 2016*.

FALSE ALARM

Residents of Tepatitlán, Mexico, saw a statue of Jesus move its head and hailed it as a miracle. However, their priest said the ropes holding it gave way. *Sun, 28 April 2017*.

ILLUMINATED ADDRESS

Mark Penney, 54, set fire to a couple's £800,000 barn conversion near Lewes, East Sussex, by pouring petrol through the letterbox and setting it alight. He then left a note wishing them a 'happy housewarming'. Philip Nash and Kelly Byrne were days away from moving in. Penney was jailed for six years. *Sunday Telegraph, 27 Nov 2016.*

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

A teenager who suffered from headaches was horrified to discover that a 4in (10cm) worm was living inside his brain. It entered Wen Xiaoli's body as a larva when he cut his hand, and travelled up through his body to live in his head while growing into an adult. It had been there for two years by the time neurosurgeon Yang Zhiquan operated, opening up his skull so that he could pull out the still wriggling worm. *Thaivisa.com, 1 April 2017.*

MARTIN ROSS

SIDELINES...

FELINE MUGGING

While out for an evening stroll near Tamatea Reserve, Taupo, New Zealand, on 11 December 2016, Jude Merwood and her Husky Sam were attacked by three feral cats. While trying to get the cats off Sam, Merwood fell over and was set upon by the cats, leaving her cut and bloodied. The cuts turned septic, requiring a week of antibiotics. *stuff.co.nz, 21 Dec 2016*.

A LIKELY STORY

On 21 February, firefighters and paramedics rescued Shawn Treadaway of New Albany, Mississippi, who had been hanging upside down from a tree in a wooded area of Blue Springs for more than four hours. He was butt naked, with a cable wrapped around him. Treadaway explained that he had been searching for a dog and decided to scale the tree, when he slipped and fell. He might have lost his clothing as he was falling, but it was unclear why he had the cable. *Fox13now.com (Salt Lake City), 23 Feb 2017.*

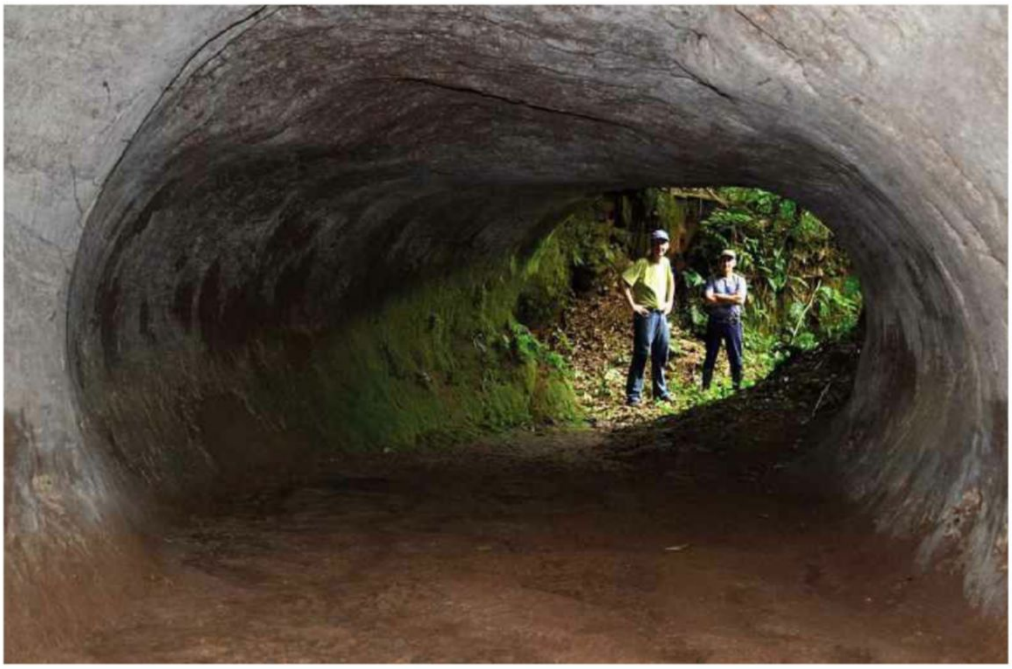
SURPRISE BURIAL

A badger in Utah's Grassy Mountains has been captured on camera burying the carcase of a cow – previously unrecorded behaviour – in an astonishing display of digging prowess. Calves weigh about 23kg (50lb), while male badgers weight on average 8.6kg (19lb). *Guardian, 1 April 2017*.

MARTIN ROSS

MEGABURROWS

South America tunnels were probably dug by giant prehistoric sloths

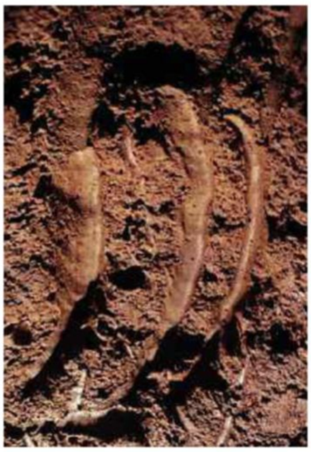


PHOTOS COURTESY HEINRICH FRANK

ABOVE: The entrance to one of the enormous tunnels in Santa Catarina, Brazil. **BELOW**: Claw marks on a burrow wall.

Heinrich Theodor Frank, a geologist at the Federal University of Rio Grande do Sul in Brazil, was driving through the town of Novo Hamburgo a few years ago when he noticed a strange hole about a metre in diameter at a construction site where excavators had removed half a hill. He was in a hurry to get home and didn't stop, but a few weeks later he went back and investigated. "I noticed that it was a tunnel, about 70cm [28in] high and a few meters in length. The interior was full of scratches. When I got home I looked for an explanation on the Internet, but I didn't find anything. Since then I have heard that the tunnels are huge anthills or that they were created by Indians, Jesuits, slaves, revolutionaries and even bears. Some even talk about a great mythological serpent, which dug the tunnels."

He eventually sent some photographs to Marcelo Rasteiro, a member of the Brazilian Society of Speleology, who responded by sending an article about palæoburrows, tunnels excavated by any type of living organism in any geological age – for example a worm in the Cambrian, a mollusk in the Mesozoic or a rat in the Pleistocene. "I didn't know there was such a thing as palæoburrows," said Frank. "I'm a geologist, a professor, and I'd never even heard of them."

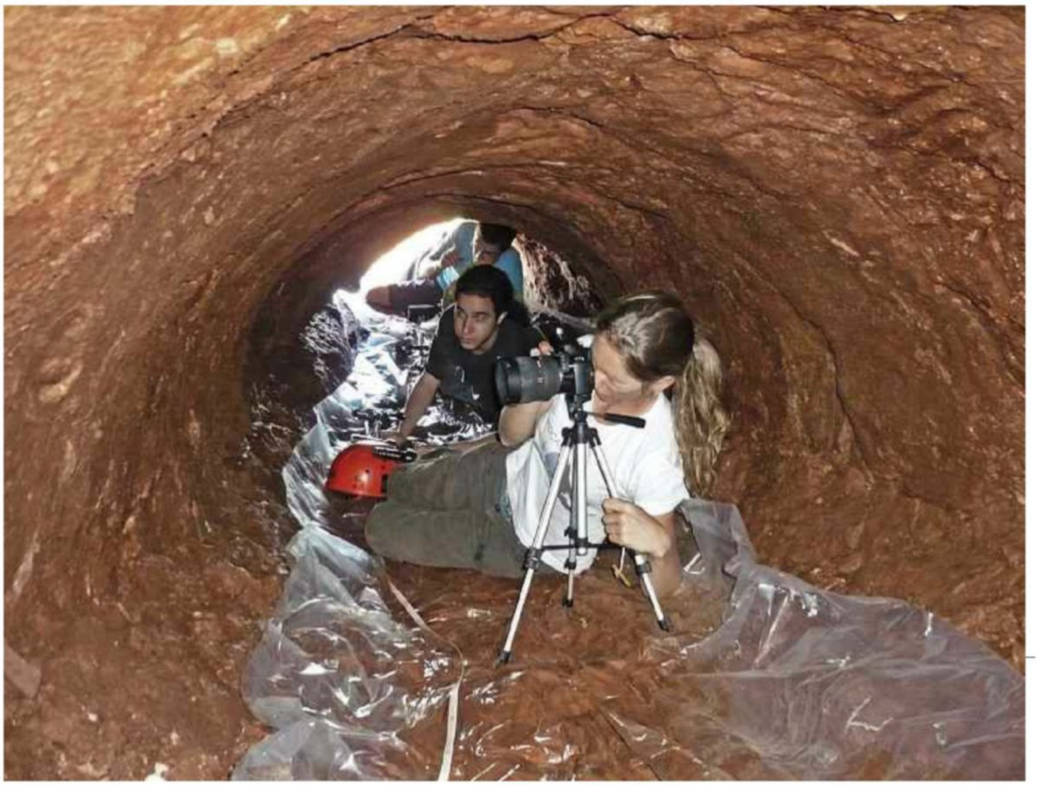


Since then, thousands of such tunnels have been discovered. Many are filled with sediment that accumulated after they were abandoned, but the circular or elliptical entrances are still discernable, like dark knots in an earthen bank. "There's no geological process in the world that produces long tunnels with a circular or elliptical cross-section, which branch and rise and fall, with claw marks on the walls," said Frank. "I've [also] seen dozens of caves that have inorganic origins, and in these cases, it's very clear that digging animals had no role in their creation."

Some of the tunnels were known about in the 1930s, but were then considered to be some kind of archæological structure – but they were certainly not created by Brazil's indigenous population who, prior to the arrival of Europeans, didn't know about the existence of iron and therefore had no tools to dig through the hard rocks in which these tunnels are dug.

Geologist Amilcar Adamy of the Brazilian Geological Survey has identified a large tunnel complex in the state of Rondonia. It turned out to be the first palæoburrow discovered in the Amazon; and also one of the largest ever measured, with branching tunnels altogether tallying about 2,000ft (600m) in length. The main shafts – since enlarged by erosion – were originally more than 6ft (1.8m) tall and 3-5ft (90-150cm) wide; an estimated 4,000 tons of dirt and rock were dug out of the hillside to create the burrow.

In his home state of Rio



COURTESY HEINRICH FRANK

ABOVE: Researchers recording marks on the inside of a burrow in Rio Grande do Sul, Brazil.

Grande do Sul, in the far south of Brazil, Frank has documented at least 1,500 palæoburrows so far. In Santa Catarina, just to the north, he's found hundreds more and counting. "In neighbouring countries such as Uruguay, Paraguay, Chile and Bolivia we have detected a few caves that could also be palæoburrows," he said. "In Argentina, there are many of them, mainly in the cliffs of the Atlantic coast, in Mar del Plata." Scientists believe they were dug between 10,000 and 8,000 years ago; speleothems (mineral deposits) growing on burrow walls could be used to calculate an age, although this has yet to be tried.

Frank believes the biggest burrows – measuring up to five feet in diameter – were dug by ground sloths. He and his colleagues consider as possibilities several genera that once lived in South America and whose fossil remains suggest adaptation for serious digging: *Catonyx*, *Glossotherium* and the massive, several-ton *Lestodon*, as big as an elephant. Others believe that extinct armadillos such as *Pampatherium*, *Holmesina* or *Propraopus*, though smaller than the sloths, were responsible for even the largest burrows. However, Frank observed: "The biggest giant armadillo had a body width of 80cm [31in], while the tunnels reach widths of 1.4m [4.6ft]. I personally believe they were excavated by land sloths, a group of mammals that became extinct in that area about 10,000 years ago. There are large tunnels up to two metres high and four metres wide that were undoubtedly excavated by sloths."

He believes the biggest burrows were dug by ground sloths

The function of the palæoburrows is unknown. "Perhaps the climate is an explanation," said Frank. "It was drier and hotter than today and the tunnels were isothermal, but this can hardly explain the complex system of tunnels several hundred metres long, which were most likely inhabited by groups of sloths or armadillos. The roofs and walls of many tunnels are polished, probably thanks to the friction of the animals' fur, which moved through the tunnels for decades or even centuries. So if a 40kg [90lb] animal living today digs a 40cm by 6m [16in by 20ft] borrow, what would dig one 1.5m [5ft] wide and 76m [250ft] long? There's no explanation – not predators, not climate, not humidity. I really don't know."

Another head-scratcher is the strange geographic distribution of palæoburrows. While common in the southern Brazilian states of Rio Grande do Sul and Santa Catarina, they are, so far, almost unknown just to the south in Uruguay (though some of the first ever described were found even further south in Argentina). Likewise, very few have been found farther north in Brazil, and Frank is aware of just a tiny handful of possible burrows in other South American countries. And though North America was also once home to giant ground sloths and giant armadillos, there don't appear to be any palæoburrows here – or maybe they just haven't been noticed. *Discover magazine, 28 Mar; Popular Mechanics, 30 Mar; Times, 17 April 2017.*

SIDELINES...

LAWYER, LAWYER, PANTS ON FIRE

A Florida defence lawyer's trousers caught fire in court during an arson trial on 8 March. Stephen Gutierrez, 28, was arguing that his client's car spontaneously combusted and wasn't intentionally set on fire, when smoke began billowing from his pocket. He fled the Miami courtroom and later blamed a faulty battery in his e-cigarette. Investigators seized frayed e-cigarette batteries as evidence. *BBC News, 9 Mar 2017.*

MOSQUITO-FREE

No one knows why, but Iceland is one of the few habitable places on the planet that has no mosquitoes, even though there are plenty of ponds and lakes where mozzies love to breed. They thrive in Norway, Scotland, and even Greenland. Maybe it's because the oceanic climate provides three freezes and three thaws a year, which is too unstable for breeding; or is it the chemical composition of the soil? *Int. NY Times, 4 Nov 2016.*

WHALE MYSTERY

A dead 40ft (12m) fin whale washed up on Holkham beach on the north Norfolk coast on 20 October 2016. Fin whales are occasionally seen on the southern and western coasts of the UK, but they have never been seen in the North Sea. Both cause and location of death were a mystery. *Guardian, 22 Oct 2016*.

NOT HIS DAY

Chris Meehan, 22, was knocked from his horse and kicked in the face during a hurdle race at Merano in Italy on 3 July 2016. The Northern Irish jockey broke his nose and was left with a gash requiring 27 stitches. The racecourse ambulance then arrived and reversed over his leg, breaking it. Ironically, Meehan's father is an ambulance driver trainer, while his brother and aunt also work for the service. *D.Telegraph, 6 July 2016*.

SIDELINES...

TODDLER SAVIOUR

A four-year-old boy saved his unconscious mother's life after calling 999 by unlocking her iPhone with her fingerprint. He pressed the woman's thumb to unblock the device and use the Siri function to call the police. Police and paramedics were able to reach the address in Croydon, south London, in 13 minutes. A policeman said it had been the "difference between life and death". *D.Telegraph, 23 Mar 2017*.

OLFACTORY SABOTAGE

Someone with a grudge left a home-owner in Stanley, near Perth, with a huge bill after stuffing mackerel, crabs and langoustine into wall cavities, under floorboards and behind the kitchen sink. Some fish were chopped and wrapped in foil, others were stored in plastic tubs. "The smell was overpowering," said a neighbour. The owner had spent two years renovating the property. *Dundee Courier & Advertiser, 28 Jan 2017*.

STICKY PROBLEM

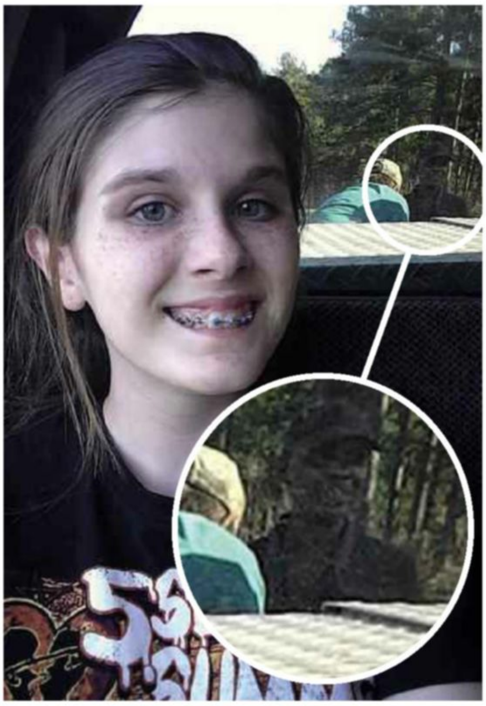
A seven-year-old Jack Russell called Finlay soon regretted chewing on a glossy leaflet that dropped through the family letterbox. The paper of the flyer reacted with his saliva to form a sticky paste, which cemented his jaw fast. He was rushed to vets in Devizes, Wiltshire, where his jaw was prized open in a 45-minute procedure. *Western Daily Press, 2 Jan 2017*.

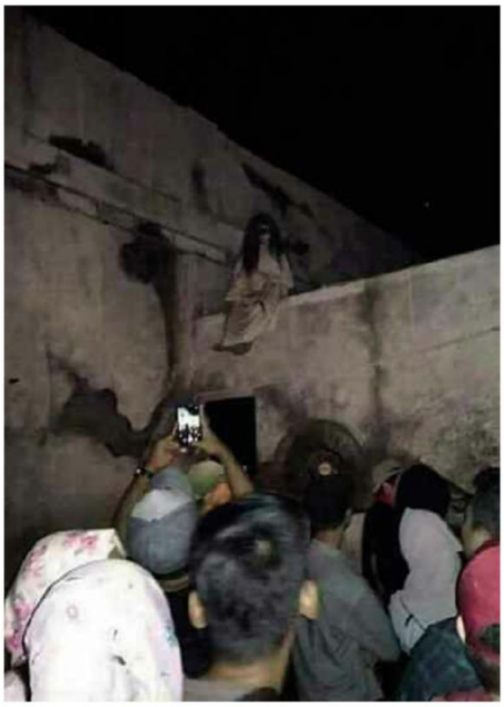
FLORIDA ETIQUETTE

At 1am on 21 November, Kristy Jo Mohr turned up at the home of Alana Annette Savell, 32, in Panama City, Florida, with a man whom she had just met in a bar. When her guests began drinking and raising their voices, Ms Savell ordered them to go, and when they didn't obey she shot them both in the legs with a 22-calibre handgun. They went to hospital with non life-threatening injuries and Ms Savell was charged with aggravated battery by a firearm. *BBC News, 23 Nov 2016*.

SPOOKY SNAPS

Phantoms on film, from the woods of New York to the streets of Hyderabad


FACEBOOK


FACEBOOK

ABOVE LEFT: Haley and the mystery man. **ABOVE RIGHT**: The Hyderabad *chudail*. **BELOW**: The girl in the Cambridge woods

PHOTOBOMBED BY A GHOST?

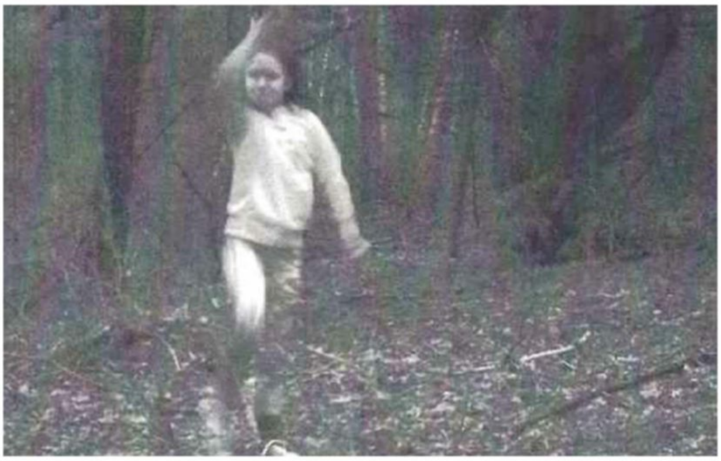
Haley Ogletree, 13, from Tifton, Georgia, and her brother Kolton went fishing with their grandparents on 25 February for Kolton's 12th birthday. After Kolton caught the biggest fish he had ever reeled in, Haley took this selfie. It shows Haley sitting in the truck, with Kolton in the truck bed behind… but also a shadowy image of a smiling man in a cap and collared shirt, standing right in front of Kolton. The two children and their grandparents hadn't seen anybody out at the back ponds in Paradise, near Tifton, where they were fishing. Kolton said that he was fixing the tacklebox and nobody else was there when the photograph was taken. *mirror.co.uk, 1 Mar; Walb.com (GA), 2 Mar 2017.*

CHUDAIL FILMED (MAYBE)

Faakhir Mehmood, a famous Pakistani singer, posting a picture of *a chudail* (*churail*) or female spirit from Bhangarh on Facebook, with the caption "Can someone verify? The supposed picture of CHURAIL captured by many people in the middle of the night in Hyderabad." The post brought Indian and Pakistani netizens together in fear and laughter. *India.com, 11 May 2017.*

THE GIRL IN THE WOODS

This eerie picture was taken in woods near Cambridge in Washington County, New York, in March. Is it a young girl lost in the woods, or something supernatural? The woods had just been purchased, and the new owners had set up a camera to make sure people were not tramping through the area. Then they saw the girl in the picture and tried to identify her in order to inform her family. After a few weeks no one had come forward, and the suspicion grew that the figure was spectral, with the photo going viral on Facebook and mediums offering help to Cambridge Police. The mystery may now have been solved by local businessman Chic Watson, who claims he was walking in the area with his granddaughter at the time. *10 News ABC, 1 May; New York Times, 5 May 2017.*



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Submarines, sonar and spooks

Are submarines vulnerable to an effect science refuses to believe in, asks **DAVID HAMBLING**

Weird science involves obscure unexplained phenomena with little significance in the wider world; but occasionally it might have strategic significance. The strange effect known as 'NIDAR' is a case in point.

During WWII, early radar operators saw peculiar traces on their screens, vast but vague objects, typically about 500m (1,640ft) across, moving slowly at an altitude of a few hundred metres. These 'spooks' appeared and disappeared unpredictably. There were no ships or aircraft to account for the radar returns. The mystery deepened when the traces were found to be following the position of submerged submarines.

This seems impossible: radar waves do not penetrate water. A surfaced submarine, or even one with just its periscope above the water, might show up on radar, and radar proved very effective at spotting submarines at the surface in the dark and in bad weather. But a submerged sub is as invisible to radar as an underground pipe is to the naked eye. In spite of this impossibility, there were many anecdotal reports of radar operators seeing 'spooks' over submarines, mainly on gunnery radar. The spooks could be seen from up to 30km (18 miles) away, and appeared to follow the sub as it moved. Reports came from everywhere, from the Gulf of Mexico to the Straits of Gibraltar, and from US Navy forces in New England and Virginia. The effect was even used to supplement sonar tracks and help follow subs in exercises. Incredibly, subs at depths as great as 200m (656ft) appeared as radar spooks.

The spooks were not consistent. Submarines were not always accompanied by spooks, and they could not be demonstrated to order. Given that the spooks should not be there at all, scientists regarded the reports as mistaken and therefore worthless. It was a classic case of Fort's 'Damned Data' – observations that contradicted known science and were ignored as a result. Submarine spooks were put in the same class as Unidentified Flying Objects, some of which were artefacts caused by glitches in early radar systems (see **FT195:36-37**). Neither was taken seriously.

However, enough reports piled up that even the US Navy could no longer entirely ignore them. An official programme of experimental investigation, known as Project NIDAR, was carried out between 1956 and 1959 by the Atlantic Destroyer Force. In one test the destroyer *USS Glennon* successfully used its gunnery radar to follow the submarine *USS Crevalle* (pictured above) while it was submerged at a depth of 50m (164ft) and moving at 3km/h (1.9mph). The tracking continued for an hour and a half, although the radar spook wavered and sometimes seemed to split into several different clouds. "It is hard to imagine how a submerged submarine can give rise to an effect one or two thousand feet above the surface," noted Merrill Skolnik, a leading US radar scientist, in an official report on Project NIDAR. "It is indeed understandable why there might be scepticism. Nevertheless, it is an experimental observation reported on many occasions."

The spooks could be seen from 18 miles away and followed the sub as it moved

The term NIDAR came from Nuclear Induction Detection and Ranging (in imitation of RADAR and SONAR), because researchers thought it might be caused by a mysterious nuclear induction effect in the atmosphere. However, by 1958 an official report on Nonacoustic Methods for the Detection of Submarines noted that: "Everybody admits – even the inventor of the word by now – that nuclear induction spin echoes have nothing to do with these radar returns." A later theory suggested spooks were related to clear air turbulence. This was many years after Project NIDAR, when more was known of atmospheric effects on radar. Warm air is lighter than cold, and so tends to rise. When the air at sea level is heated by the Sun, rising bubbles of warm air called convective cells form. These may be several hundred metres across and show up as a faint cloud on radar, just like the radar spooks.

The new theory held that surface turbulence from the submarine mixed lighter moist air with heavier dry air and produced a similar rising bubble of air that would be visible as a radar spook. While this might work for a sub close to the surface, a submarine at 100m (328ft) produces a bow wave less than 1cm high, hardly enough to generate a spook.

The Navy Research Laboratory researchers were not convinced and concluded that the radar was locking on to waves, rather than anything in the air. In 1959, NIDAR became Project Cutwater, concentrating on developing advanced radar to detect the submarines bow waves. NIDAR test data was ignored, and Cutwater gradually moved to detecting periscopes and snorkels rather than wakes. This avoided unexplained phenomena or weird science. In fact the new radar worked by cancelling out all background 'noise' – including the spooks.

Skolnik, who had been involved in the original tests, still believed that NIDAR had detected something. He carried out another analysis decades later, in a 1975 Navy report which was also apparently ignored (and classified). Skolnik wrote yet another report in 1996 which is still classified, but which appears to repeat the same theme.

The Russians, who lacked good sonar and needed other ways of tracking subs, seized on the NIDAR effect. Soviet anti-submarine vessels had notably large radar antenna. Skolnik noted that these would be ideal for spook spotting, and in the 1960s some claimed the radar could detect subs. These claims were dismissed by Western analysts. The technology has no doubt progressed since then.

We still rely on submarines for our strategic deterrent. The Royal Navy proudly (and uncheckably) claims that no Trident submarine has ever been detected while out on patrol, and an enormous effort is under way to ensure that the Dreadnought subs replacing them will be undetectable by sonar. But if researchers do not believe in submarine-generated UFOs they will not find out how to prevent them – and with a radar spook hovering above them giving away their position, any submarine may be a sitting duck.

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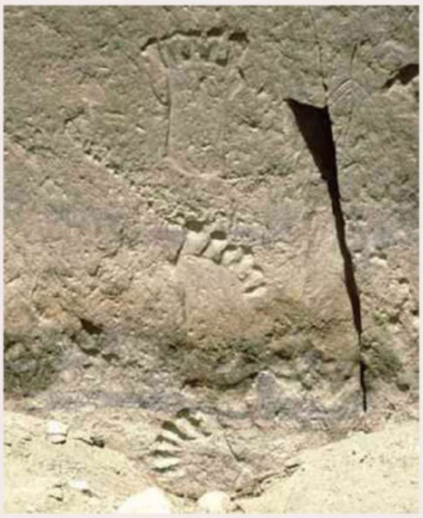
ARCHÆOLOGY A MONTHLY EXCAVATION OF ODDITIES AND ANTIQUITIES

PAUL DEVERAUX ponders polydactyly in Pueblo Bonito and finds that hobbits were not human...

PAUL DEVERUX



PETER FARIS

TWINKLE TOES

Chaco Canyon in northwestern New Mexico was a ritual centre of the Anasazi, a now extinct Native American culture ancestral to the Pueblo Indians of today. The canyon contains ruins of extensive pueblo complexes called 'Great Houses', and has deeply enigmatic dead straight and wide roads, sometimes running in parallel, converging on it from distant locations, despite the fact that the Anasazi had neither the wheel nor horses.

The Anasazi culture, along with the nature of what went on in the canyon, has been the subject of research by scholars for decades. Increasingly exact archæological techniques are continuing to reveal more and more about the mysteries of this place. Two recent findings and observations stand out.

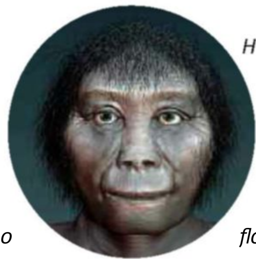
The largest of the Great Houses is multi-storied Pueblo Bonito (pictured above left), covering 1.2 hectares (3 acres) and containing 800 rooms. Scores of skeletons have been found in some of them. Many individuals buried in one of Pueblo Bonito's oldest rooms, known to researchers as Room 33, shared maternal ancestry: in the recent studies, researchers from Penn State University extracted mitochondrial DNA (which is typically passed from mother to child) from skeletons of nine of 14 individuals interred in the room. Members of this Pueblo Bonito group, the researchers reported, inherited mitochondrial DNA that was similar enough to indicate shared kinship with a female line. Nuclear DNA recovered from six Room 33 skeletons identified two as mother and daughter and two others as a grandmother and grandson. The earliest burials in Room 33, essentially a crypt, carbon-date to circa AD 800. It seems women featured significantly in the life of Chaco Canyon, perhaps in terms of a matriarchy, something that had not been properly appreciated previously.

The other line of research involves a particularly puzzling and weird factor: it seems the ancient denizens of Chaco regarded six-toed people as special. (This condition apparently affects about 2.4 of every 1,000 Native Americans today.) Three of the burials in Pueblo Bonito were six-toed, and footprints and handprints displaying six digits also appear on several plastered walls at Pueblo Bonito. Rock art generally in Chaco Canyon depicts almost 800 human feet, with anywhere from three to eight toes (like those found behind Pueblo Bonito, pictured above). Of 13 ancient sandals recovered at Pueblo Bonito, seven include woven extensions for a sixth toe. "Having six toes brought social honor in Chaco society," claims archæologist Patricia Crown of the University of New Mexico in Albuquerque. But she added: "We don't know why Chaco people were so interested in feet or what feet symbolized to them." *Science News, 17 May 2017.*

HOBBITS ARE NOT US

We have previously reported on the 2003 discovery of the so-called 'hobbit' bones on the Indonesian island of Flores [**FT236:20, 246:18, 252:18, 347:12**]. These beings (*Homo floresiensis*) averaged 1.1m (43in) in height, and were originally assumed to be early humans, *Homo sapiens*, who had evolved in isolation on the island leading over time to them experiencing 'insular dwarfism', a phenomenon in which animals that live on an island over time tend to shrink, like the 1.2m (4ft)-tall mammoths that developed on the island of Crete. But now a detailed study and analysis of the remains by the Australian National University has concluded that they were not part of the direct human chain at all. "We found that if you try and link them on the family tree, you get a very unsupported result. All the tests say it doesn't fit," said the study's leader, Dr Debbie Argue.

The researchers' analysis, much more comprehensive than anything attempted previously, indicates that *Homo floresiensis* could have branched off the line from a common ancestor in Africa more than 1.75 million years ago. "The hobbit genus is very archaic indeed," Argue stresses, and may have been a sister lineage strand to *Homo habilis*, a very early human precursor, and not to *Homo erectus*, the early ancestor of modern humanity. Another of the researchers, Professor Mike Lee, stated: "*Homo floresiensis* occupied a very primitive position on the human evolutionary tree. We can be 99 per cent sure it's not related to *Homo erectus* and nearly 100 per cent chance it isn't a malformed *Homo sapiens*." *Phys.org, 21 April 2017; Smithsonian Smart News, 25 April 2017.*



CLASSICAL CORNER

FORTEANA FROM THE ANCIENT WORLD COMPILED BY BARRY BALDWIN

213: HAIRS APPARENT

“ But my brother Esau is an hairy man and I am a smooth man” – Genesis 27.11, inspiring Alan Bennett’s classic *Beyond The Fringe* sketch.

(Appropriate here that Britain’s most erudite and witty classicist should be Mary *Beard.*)

Back in the 1960s when Middle America regarded ‘long-haired hippies’ as immoral cowardly draft-dodgers, I enjoyed pointing out that antiquity’s greatest warriors had similarly long locks. Homer’s Achæans are regularly styled ‘long-haired’. Lycurgus, founder of Sparta’s militaristic life-style pronounced “Long hair adds beauty to a good face and terror to an ugly one.”

Plutarch (*Theseus*, ch5) says both this Athenian king and the Abantes tribe wore their hair long behind but short in front to prevent face-to-face enemies from grabbing it. This so impressed Alexander the Great that he likewise banned beards.

‘Theseis’ became a style name. Likewise, the ‘Hector’; cf. RG Austin & J Boardman, *Classical Quarterly* 22, 1972, 199, & 23, 1973, 196-7. Both long before the likes of Beckham and Felleine were identified with individual coiffures.

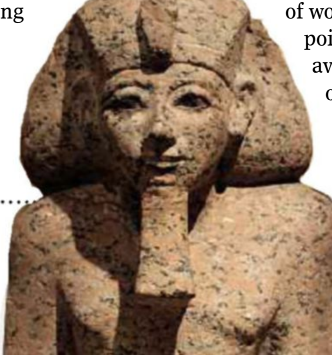
Thucydides (bk1 ch6), not normally one for exotic detail, says the Athenians had only just given up tying their hair behind in knots fastened by golden grasshopper clips.

Mustn’t forget Samson, unimprovably described by Elvis:

“Samson told Delilah
loud and clear,
Keep your cotton-pickin’ fingers
Right out of my hair” – *Hard-Headed Woman*

Hatshepsut (below), the lone female Pharoah, wore a false beard in public to assert regal gender status. Greek brides (or bridezillas) at Argos wore false beards (doubling as merkins? see below) on honeymoon night for the same reason.

For lurid comparison, Juvenal’s Ninth Satire (“One of the most shocking poems ever written” – commentator Gilbert Highet) begins with Ravola’s beard sodden in the effluvia of the woman he was cunnilinguing – he otherwise eliminated unwanted hair with bird-lime.



Carthaginian explorer Hanno’s log-book (*Periplus*, ch18) reports finding “Hairy women which our interpreters called Gorillæ”. Three were captured, killed, and skinned; cf. E Post, *Notes & Queries* 23, 1850, 361-2.

At the other end of antiquity, Byzantine chariot-racing hooligans (Procopius, *Secret History*, bk7 ch4), whilst retaining luxuriant beards and moustaches, had hair cut back in front, flowing Loretta Lynn-style behind, dubbing this anti-skinhead tendency ‘Hunnic’.

The actual Huns (Ammianus, bk31 ch31 paras1-6) had notably hairy legs but no beards, retarding their growth by childhood branding of cheeks.

According to their biographers Suetonius and the *Augustan History*, Nero, derided for wearing his hair in ringlets, offered his first-shave clippings to Jupiter – other Romans followed suit. His wife Poppæa (above) sported a ‘Tower’ bouffant, about which Nero wrote a poem – one word, *sucinos* = amber, survives; cf. JPVD Balsdon, *Roman Women,* pp255-60.

Poppæa (like Cleopatra) bathed daily in asses’ milk, which may have kept her tresses free from the infestations alleged in 1960s Dolly-Birds’ bouffants, the latter probably not rivalling the beard (presumably a ‘Full Marx’) of an old glutton in the Byzantine satire *Timarion* (ch18; cf my 1984 annotated translation) inhabited by mice.

(Nero’s ringlets, Poppæa’s tower: case of HIS-pid and HER-sute)

Augustus shaved his legs with red-hot nutshells. Otho plucked out his own body hair and de-bearded by applying moistened bread. Domitian (author of a – lost – book on hair care) personally depilated his concubines, as did teenager Elagabalus his minions, using the same razor to shave first his beard then his own pubes.

Apart from their tiny willies, statues of Greek gods and heroes conspicuously lack public hair. Likewise, those of women. Numerous sources point to a widespread aversion to pubic hair, often called the Delta, owing to its triangular configuration; cf. Anaïs Nin’s *Delta of Venus*. Despite the pain, they preferred the billiard-ball effect; personally, I like a good minge-fringe.

Since there is pictorial evidence for Roman two-piece bikinis, albeit not so itsybitsyteenyweeny as in the Brian Hyland song, we may speculate on ancient anticipations of full Brazilians and vajazzing – the latter inaugurated or revived by Mary Quant.

A famous anecdote has John Ruskin fleeing his honeymoon bed in horror at wife Effie’s pubic hair. Just as well he never peeked into the snuff-box at St Andrews University stuffed with the public hairs of one of George IV’s mistresses.

The first Roman to shave daily was the aristocratic general Scipio Aemilianus. Two centuries later, Emperor Hadrian reversed the trend by sporting a rich growth advertising his obsessive philhellenism. In between (Cicero, *Letters to Atticus*, bk1 no14 para5) come the ‘Beardlets’ (*Barbatuli*), denoting the thugs in train to gangster-boss Clodius – rather different from today’s glabrous hard men.

Apart from the pain from using crude depilatories and razors, rulers and other bigwigs avoided shaving from fear of being done in by Sweeney Todd-minded barbers – apparently they were as incapable of shaving themselves as are the Granthams at Downton Abbey at dressing.

Many sources (e.g. Lucian, Petronius, Plutarch) ridicule barbers’ shops as gossip factories, the razor-wielders themselves derided for their garrulity and incompetence. Martial (*Epigrams*, bk2 no17) complains of a female one in the Suburra slum district who “didn’t shave me; she skinned me.” Cf. FW Nicholson, *Harvard Studies in Classical Philology* 2, 1891, 41-56.

Whether they whispered as you paid, “Would there be anything else, Sir?” – suggesting, as I remember, the purchase of a packet of Durex – I cannot say.

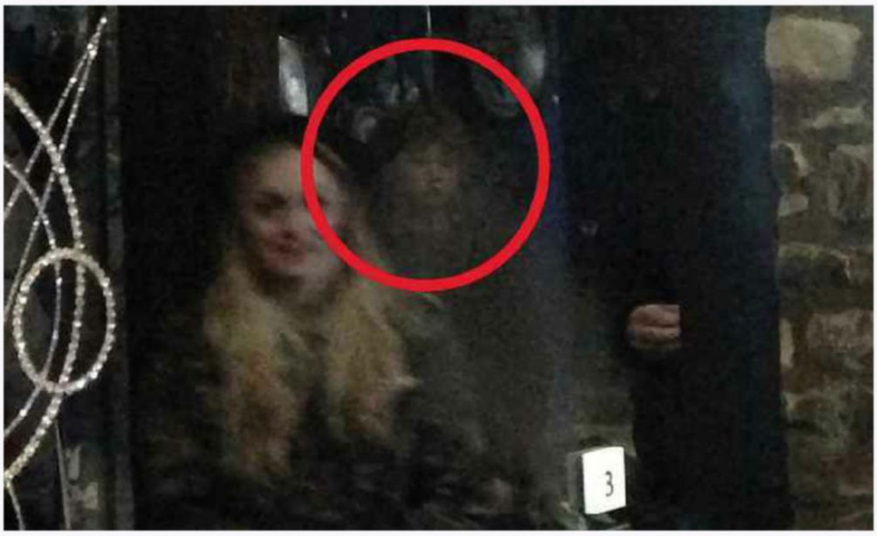
A famous exchange, anciently attributed to Macedonian King Archelaus, modernly to both Enoch Powell and Quentin Hogg:

Q: How would you like your hair cut, Sire?

A: In silence.

Spectral monks and historical spooks

ALAN MURDIE rounds up six months' worth of the latest hauntings from around the UK



MERCURY PRESS AND MEDIA

LEFT: Mary Ryan, with a mysterious boy she believes to be the ghost of 12-year-old Edward V appearing behind her. **OPPOSITE**: Tracy Proctor.

Historic and legendary figures, spectral monks, a deceased footballer, an accident victim and even inanimate objects such as an aeroplane have all been reported as ghosts actively haunting homes, pubs, roads, and skies around England in the six months between December 2016 and May 2017. The following article summarises a number of cases appearing in the press and on-line news sites; all should be treated as being "alleged".

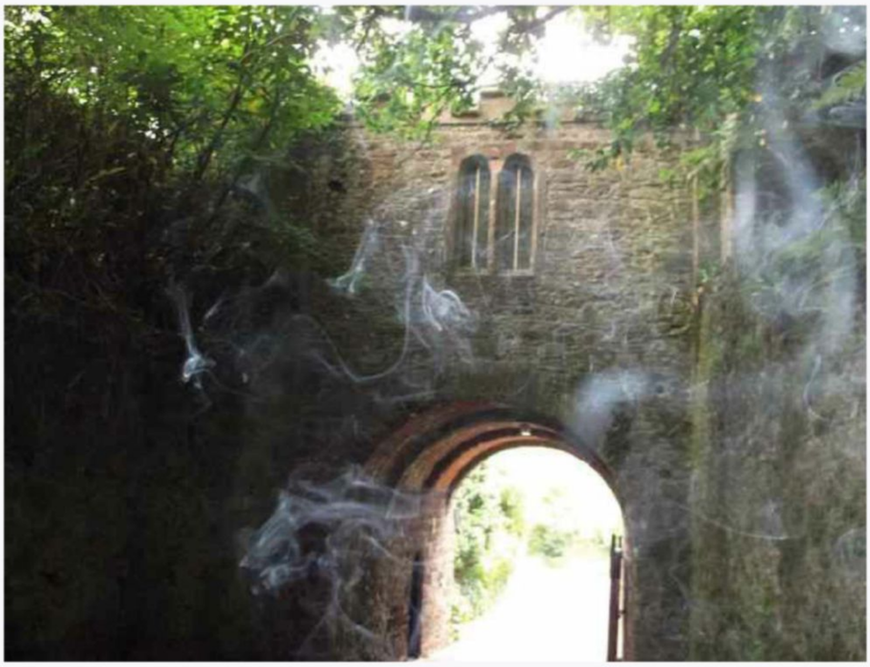
A jaywalking male apparition stepping out onto the A15 road at Sleaford in Lincolnshire made news in early December 2016. First reported in 1998, shaken motorists speak of a man "with his hand up" walking into the path of traffic, and of a "black silhouette figure of a man" running across the road. Witnesses believe they have driven into him but no one is found when they stop. Margaret Green, who used to lead ghost walks around Lincoln, states: "I was told that it was a young man who was speeding along the road and crashed and died. The theory is he is warning other drivers who are driving too fast on the road." Some connect this ghost with a phantom pedestrian dubbed the 'Ruskington Horror' near Corby Grange, dubiously linked with a plague burial site (*www.lincolnshirelive.co.uk 5 Dec 2016*).

In Cornwall, an anonymous ghost was blamed for overturning a pub Christmas tree. Landlord Richard Jago came into the bar of the 500-year-old White Hart pub at Bodmin to find the decorated tree had been balanced upside-down overnight. He is convinced his pub is haunted after experiencing footsteps, voices, banging sounds and bottles moving. (*CornwallLive website, 2 Dec 2016*).

In January 2017 Mary Ryan told the *Daily Express* that she believes a boy who appears standing behind her in a photograph taken when visiting the Tower of London is the ghost of 12-year-old Edward V. The boy king was one of the two Princes who disappeared at the Tower in 1483, incarcerated by their uncle Richard III. Miss Ryan visited the Tower with her boyfriend and two daughters and noticed nothing unusual when the photograph was taken. No independent analysis is reported on the picture and the possibility that this shows a living boy remains. (*D.Express, 6 Jan 2017*).

A fortnight later, John Mooner of the British Earth and Aerial Mysteries Society (BEAMs) also received similar national publicity after he claimed to have photographed another mediæval spirit. He interprets wispy shapes in a photograph taken at Cockington, Devon, as the spirit of Robin Hood brandishing a ghostly sword, notwithstanding the fact that Robin has no traditional association with the county apart from appearances as a character in folk plays. Other people have interpreted the shapes as a cavalier, or simply drifting smoke. Exactly what Robin is doing spoiling photographs is unclear. Mr Mooner also claims success photographing aliens last autumn. (*Sun, 23 Jan 2017*).

More plausible CCTV film recording the door of a candle lantern swinging open by itself was obtained in the bar of the



JOHN MOONER / SWNS

ABOVE: John Mooner says he snapped the ghost of Robin Hood, complete with ghostly sword.

Antrobus Hotel in Amesbury, Wiltshire. The incident occurred during a ghost hunt organised by the group Wiltshire Paranormal. Selena Wright and other members the group state the phenomenon was accompanied by a loud clicking sound. (*D.Express, 31 Jan 2017*).

In February 2017 a mysterious plane was observed in the skies over the Derbyshire Peak District. Many witnesses state that the white aircraft makes no sound and conclude it must be a ghost. Local press and media declared themselves 'inundated' by calls and letters about the plane, which resembles a Douglas Dakota aircraft from World War II. Only a few working examples remain today, with flying confined to the summer months. Phantom planes are an established part of the ghostlore of Derbyshire Peaks and a Douglas Dakota crashed in the hills in 1949, killing 24 people. However, aviation enthusiasts raise the possibility of this being a material aircraft being given test runs during the winter and modern technology used to dampen engine noise. (*Derbyshire Times, 13+22 Feb 2017*).

On the ground, troublesome domestic ghosts featured throughout February and March 2017. Author and former model Alex Best, 44, reported a haunting at her cottage in Kingswood, Surrey. She suffers taps turning on, lights switching on, moving furniture and the disappearance of her keys and mobile phone. One proposal is the ghost is her former husband, deceased football star George Best (1946-2005) to whom she was married between 1995 and 2004 and who died of liver failure. However, Ms Best rejects this suggestion, believing the ghost is an old man named Tom who once lived at the property. (*Belfast Eve. Telegraph, 3+15 Feb 2017*).

In Wakefield, Yorkshire, Tracy Proctor reported being targeted by a 'man-hating black monk ghost' who ruins her chances of finding a new partner. Ms Proctor, 52, says the ghost is protective of her but has driven away her two sons and male friends and admirers, scared by a hooded figure and unexplained footsteps. Keys, glasses and e-cigarettes have moved mysteriously and the underwear of an antique dressed doll she keeps in the house has been pulled down. Parallels have been drawn with the 'Black Monk of Pontefract' case (1966-68), but Ms Proctor maintains she has only vaguely heard of the infamous so-called poltergeist that rampaged at 33 East Drive, Pontefract, and which has allegedly returned in the wake of the 2012 horror film on the case, *When the Lights Went Out* (see **FT293:28-37**). Ms Proctor also reports a phantom corgi being present. (*D.Mail, 9 Feb 2017*).

MERCURY PRESS & MEDIA

Tracy Proctor reported being targeted by a 'man-hating black monk ghost' who ruins her chances of finding a new partner

In York, single mum Tracy Bruce, 21, fled her one-bedroom flat with her young son after scratches, object movements, plugs pushing themselves out of walls and electric toys working by themselves. (*D.Mirror, 1 Mar 2017*). Two weeks later in Bury, near Manchester, a 'pervy ghost' wearing a white hoodie and jeans was claimed to be aggravating women by grabbing them at a family home. (*Sun, 15 Mar 2017*). At Cotteridge, Birmingham, 87-year-old pensioner Ron Roberts revealed his sheltered flat was haunted by the ghosts of a man and a troublesome woman. Mr Roberts has seen the unexplained figure of the man in his kitchen. He has not seen the woman, but blames her for breaking the video, turning off lights and ringing the doorbell. He has undergone the disturbing experience of feeling both ghosts getting into bed with him and believes they are former residents of the flat who died 22 years ago. (*Birmingham Mail, 4 Mar 2017*).

Predictably, a phantom monk is deemed responsible for disturbances at the Merry Monk Bar and Carvery Restaurant at Bishop Auckland, Co. Durham. At least that is the conclusion of the landlord and the group Ghostnortheast. The monk is blamed for anomalous electrical activity, voices, doors opening and shutting by themselves, temperatures drops, unexplained figures in the bar and an eerie feeling sensed by visitors. During an investigation, a wooden cross was thrown by an unseen presence (a somewhat unchristian action for a ghost in holy orders). Elaine Kelly and Bev Rodda from 'Spectre Detectors' have a CCTV image showing what is interpreted as the monk's face. The bar stands on former monastic lands and local lore avers a friar was once burned at the stake there. (*Sun, 21 Mar 2017; Northern Echo, 22 Mar 2017*).

Another ghost monk (known as 'Cuthbert') claimed to be haunting the Rutland Arms at Newark, Nottinghamshire, with the release of the image of a shadowy form at an upstairs window (actually captured in August 2016). Filmmaker Sean Reynolds, 33, was shooting a programme on ghost hunting. A few days later footage of a ladder purportedly moving by itself and scaring a workman was posted on-line, but the *Sun* reports it was unable to verify this footage. (*Sun, 24 Mar 2017*).

The most publicised ghost report in April concerned a clip of what was claimed as a male apparition filmed coming through a door and moving along a corridor at Wentworth Woodhouse mansion in South Yorkshire. The image was obtained by a film crew member of the TV series *Most Haunted*. A new series of the show aired on the channel Really on 21 April 2017. Presenter Yvette Fielding describes the film as 'ground-breaking', identifying the form as a shadowy figure previously reported walking the corridors of the building built by the first Earl of Stafford in 1630 (traditionally, the shade of Stafford appeared to Charles I on the eve of the Battle of Naseby). Other apparently paranormal activity detected during the programme included noises, doors slamming, objects being thrown and chairs 'unexpectedly appearing'.

Another strange image reported in April was taken at Kirkstall Abbey, Leeds, and inevitably interpreted as a ghostly monk, perhaps 'the Old Abbot'. In April the *Yorkshire Evening Post* website published two photographs taken seconds apart by

Sophie Davey after the gates of the Abbey had been closed to visitors, the second of which appears to show an unexplained figure by a pillar. However, as Andrew Green noted in *Ghost Hunting: A Practical Guide* in 1973 concerning the nearby Kirkstall Abbey House Museum, "Any shape that at all resembles the human outline, however vague, is immediately assumed to be that of an apparition… Once an incident has been reported in the local paper the witnesses' stories become exaggerated". Between 1968-73 at least four people witnessed apparitions and experienced phenomena at the museum and Leonard Cooper, a Yorkshire author whose grandfather lived in the property when it was a private house, stated that ghosts were present in the 1880s.

The Unicorn Pub in Marden, Kent, also had a wandering male spectre. The pub has been re-opened by Kellie Maloney, a former boxer who underwent a sex change in 2014. She believes the friendly spirit, "a landlord from the 1800s", is haunting the building, and comes "through the coffee shop after closing time and disappears up the chimney." (*D.Star, 25 April 2017*).

In May, ghost hunters Paranormal Friends reported making contact and holding séance conversations with a spirit identified as "Sergeant Eric Young" in the Wartime Recovery Group Museum at Sleap Airfield, near Wem, Shropshire (*Shropshire Star, 7 May 2017*). Meanwhile in Devon, Suzi Chadwick, who took over the Church House Inn at Churchstow, in January 2017, reports that members of her family have experienced footsteps, "a figure in a tweedy fabric" (again interpreted as a monk), a presence in a corridor and a sensation of someone sitting on a bed. Daphne Lanham, who worked at the pub for 23 years, tells of shadowy figures and glasses flying off the shelves. A medium called in by Ms Chadwick declares the pub has numerous spirits, including several monks, a man called Francis and a lady in black called Margaret. (*Kingsbridge and Salcombe Gazette, 3 May 2017*).

ABOVE: The Church House Inn in Churchstow, Devon, appears to be home to numerous spirits according to those who have worked there over the years.

The foregoing selection of contemporary haunts could have been greatly expanded if all the stories of the "Does this photo show a ghost?" variety were included. Public fascination with ghosts shows no sign of evaporating; for example a charity ghost walk at old Worcester Royal Infirmary in February 2017 attracted hundreds of entrants. Unfortunately, in the 21st century news items increasingly stem from a single unanalysed image or footage rather than actual witness testimony with the exception of physical phenomena (e.g. the moving candle lantern door at Amesbury). Press coverage is all the poorer for it, and far from advancing enquiry, the fixation on publishing ambiguous photographs inhibits any greater scientific or philosophical understanding of the age-old question of ghosts. Actual eyewitness testimony is replaced with dubious and imaginative interpretations of what a photograph might possibly represent, since in most cases absolutely nothing unusual was noticed at the time. Regrettably many ghost hunting groups fail to engage in any critical examination of the images they obtain since they already believe they know the answers, typically convinced that a ghost is a spirit of the dead rather than an experience to be explained. For many, the principal purpose of obtaining and publicising a 'ghost photograph' is a confirmation of pre-existing beliefs rather than any advance in our knowledge of apparitional experiences. Arguably, proper analysis requires consideration of four elements: sense perception; the cognitive construction of images; the emotional comprehension; and the social and cultural confirmation. (See H Stenger, 1993: *Die Social Konstruction okkulter Wirklichkeit. Eine Soziologie des 'New Age'*).

Altogether, it must be admitted that few of these stories – certainly as reported – approach the strict-proof criteria required to be suggestive of even a *prima facie* case in psychical research. Indeed, if reported accurately, a number appear to be of psychological rather than parapsychological interest, though certain consistencies with reports in previous years are present, particularly with pub hauntings.

Undoubtedly, many contemporary haunting manifestations, especially involving small-scale incidents, go wholly unreported. Over the same period, I received privately two first-hand accounts involving strange physical events within domestic dwellings. One was an unexplained incident coinciding closely with the death of a friend of the percipient, whilst the other involved the movement of an object in the vicinity of a living person suffering from Alzheimer's disease. Rather than being ghosts, unconscious psychokinesis from a living person might provide at least a partial explanation for such cases (as well as several listed above).

Limited in value as press reports may now be, they are nonetheless of folkloric and sociological interest. Although I have not undertaken any specific statistical analysis, one may gain the impression, at least superficially, that we are seeing an increase in hauntings attributed to mediæval monks. Historically, monk apparitions prove most common in the period between 1880-1970, with a crest in numbers reached from the early 1940s through to the mid-1960s. Thereafter, sightings of monk ghosts undergo a decline, with relatively few in the last two decades.

Furthermore, a qualitative change may also be apparent. Whereas past accounts describe monkish apparitions as neutral or even friendly and helpful to witnesses, today's ghostly monks are presented as increasingly troublesome and hostile. If correct, what can explain such an apparent resurgence and a simultaneous change in tone and demeanour of England's spectral monk population? This is a question that the theologian, the psychical researcher, the spiritualist, the psychologist, the sociologist and cultural commentator all might like to ponder.

CHASED BY THE REAPER

Could these two disaster-magnets be Britain’s luckiest (or unluckiest) men?

LEFT: Death-defying Ian Francis.
BELOW: Disaster-dodging Ian Fordrey.

THE SUN / NEWS SYNDICATION

O LUCKY MAN!

Father-of-five Ian Francis, 48, has cheated death a dozen times. In 1989 an electric shock from a television threw him across the room. Three years later he was electrocuted again by a faulty socket. “I was rushed to hospital with burns on my hand,” he said. “It was that year that I was registered blind.” In 1993 a stolen van ran him over. In 1996 he was in the next street when an IRA bomb injured 200 in Manchester. Two years later a growth was found on his brain. “I said my goodbyes to my children, but they managed to take it out through my ear.”

Another hit-and-run driver almost killed him in 2006. Months later, he had a heart attack in the street. He “died” 17 times in the ambulance as paramedics kept battling to bring him back from the brink. A month later an accidental Prozac overdose left him in intensive care. In 2013 he survived a 10-car motorway pile-up on the M4. In June 2015 his guide dog Toffee ran off for three days. In December he had his right kidney removed in a cancer scare. In February 2017 he was fitted with a pacemaker shortly before a gas canister exploded in a neighbour’s Oxford home, causing a three-storey block of six flats to collapse. One resident was killed. Ian, who lives with his girlfriend Sammy Clark, 34, said: “Our block is attached and nearly fell down as well. Luckily, we’d popped out to the shops.” The damage was so severe the couple were homeless. Ian mused: “I think I must be Britain’s luckiest bloke – to still be here.” *Sun, 4 Mar 2017.*

CAPTAIN CATASTROPHE

Dubbed ‘Captain Catastrophe’ by his friends, Ian Fordrey, 52 is a driving instructor from London who is phenomenally unlucky – or lucky, depending on your point of view. On a school trip to Aviemore in Scotland, aged 11, he and his schoolmates arrived at their destination to find they’d been left dozens of phone messages from worried parents. The train directly after theirs had crashed. A year later, on a school trip to Switzerland, the same thing happened: the train behind them crashed in a tunnel. In 1992, he had lunch with his ex-wife and a friend at the Sussex Tavern in London’s Covent Garden. The following lunchtime, the IRA blew it up, killing one person and injuring five others. In 1995, the day after he had a flying lesson at Biggin Hill, his instructor and another pupil were killed, in the same plane he had flown in. There had been complete engine failure, just one hour after he’d climbed out of the aircraft. Travelling to South Africa, the plane he was flying in narrowly missed landing on top of another plane, which had received erroneous information from air control; and while above Denmark the plane he was in flew so close to another aircraft that it skimmed its wing.

The year after his close call at Biggin Hill, he was working for a motorcycle courier company delivering a package to a company in London’s Dockland before going home. By the time he had got home an IRA bomb had destroyed the building he had delivered the parcel to, killing two and causing £100 million worth of damage. “I missed that bomb by about 20 minutes,” he said. “The same thing happened with the Vauxhall helicopter crash [in January 2013 a helicopter collided with the jib of a construction crane, killing the pilot and one pedestrian.] I’d been right there 10 minutes earlier.”

In 2006 Ian and his then-wife were visiting Elounda in Crete and looking for a spot of lunch when they came to the Megaro restaurant. They looked at the menu and Ian wanted to go in but his wife insisted they walk further into town to eat. They were just 200m (660ft) down the road when she told him to turn round. The restaurant was in flames. There had been a gas explosion in the kitchen and the chef lost his arm. “I just said, ‘For crying out loud…’ and my wife said, “Oh, for God’s sake.’ We were both so used to it at that stage.”

In 2010 Ian and his ex-wife flew to San Francisco for a holiday. They drove from the airport to the centre of town, where they went to a bar for lunch. Everybody was looking up at the telly and watching an orange glow. “The little town by the airport, the one we’d driven through an hour earlier, was on fire,” said Ian. “The gas mains had ruptured, killing 50 people.”

A couple of years later, on another trip to Crete, Ian found somebody in his seat. “I’d paid for extra leg room, but there was an old man in my seat,” he said. “I left him there and took the seat next to him instead. Next thing I know his wife, sitting the other side of him, is screaming. The old boy was slumped over and completely grey. A doctor came and dragged him down the aisle where they resuscitated him.”

“Almost all the bad things happen when I’m on holiday, so anyone who travels with me has raised eyebrows and a sense of ‘bring it on’,” he said. “But actually people travel with me because they know they’ll be safe. Nothing actually happens to me or the people with me. We all miss disaster.” *D.Mail, 9 June 2014.*

> *“The little town we’d driven through earlier was on fire.”*

I NEED A MIRACLE

Pope Francis canonises the shepherd children behind the Fatima Secrets but casts doubt on the Medjugorje visions

PATRICIA DE MELO MOREIRA / AFP / GETTY IMAGES

ABOVE: Pope Francis prays before a statue of Our Lady of Fatima during his visit to the Portuguese town to canonise Francisco and Jacinta Marto (below).

Hundreds of thousands of people from around the world packed the central square in the Portuguese town of Fatima on 13 May to witness Pope Francis canonise two shepherd children. The ceremony marks a century since Francisco and Jacinta Marto, aged nine and seven, and their cousin Lucia Dos Santos, 10, claimed the Virgin Mary first appeared to them, as a shining figure in an oak tree. She told them she had come from Heaven and they must return at the same time on the 13th day of the next five months. On 13 July, she revealed three 'Secrets' (or prophecies). On 13 October, 70,000 people turned up to witness the children in trance, roughly half of whom saw (or imagined they saw) the Sun spinning or "dancing", changing colour, and falling to earth. The Marto siblings, the youngest non-martyrs to have been declared saints, died in the Spanish flu pandemic that swept Europe after World War I. Dos Santos, who became a Carmelite nun and died in 2005 aged 97, was buried with them in Fatima's basilica in 2006 and is also due to be canonised. Pilgrims came from as from as China and Venezuela to watch the Mass held by Pope Francis, who travelled through Fatima, north of Lisbon, in his Popemobile.

They claimed the Virgin Mary appeared to them in an oak tree

The case for canonising the Marto siblings received a boost when a miracle in the Brazilian state of Parana was attributed to them. Five-year-old Lucas Batista fell from an open window in March 2013 and smashed his skull on the ground 20ft (6m) below. He went into a coma, suffered two heart attacks and had a severe brain injury. His family, followers of Our Lady of Fatima, prayed to the shepherd children for a miracle. Lucas's father Joao said: "Two days later Lucas woke up and started talking." He went home six days later. There was in fact an earlier miracle attributed to the children. It said that they had interceded to heal a 70-year-old paraplegic Portuguese woman who had not walked for 22 years. In 1998 the woman travelled to Rome to testify before a Vatican-appointed medical commission, which found that her healing was scientifically inexplicable.

The Fatima Secrets were written down by Lucia, years after the apparitions that the three said they had witnessed. Two were revealed in the 1940s. The First Secret was a harrowing vision of Hell, and threatened another world war unless humankind mended its ways. One portent would be the "great unknown light" in the night skies, signalling an outbreak of war "within the next pontificate". (The next pontiff, Pius XI, died in 1939, the year World War II broke out.) The Second Secret was a warning that Russia (which underwent the Bolshevik revolution a few weeks after the BVM's last appearance to the children) would "spread her errors through the world, causing wars and persecution" unless she

TIZIANA FABI / AFP / GETTY IMAGES

ABOVE: Pope Francis embraces Lucas Batista, whose miraculous recovery from injuries caused by a fall was attributed to the Marto siblings.

reverted to Christianity.

Lucia sealed the Third Secret in an envelope, which was handed to the Vatican in 1957 and only revealed in 2000 [**FT136:8-9, 137:66**]. It described an angel demanding "penance", then the Pope and other clergy climbing a mountain, only to be killed by soldiers firing bullets and arrows. When Pope John Paul II was shot by Turkish gunman Mehmet Ali Agca on 13 May 1981 (the anniversary of the first Fatima vision), he believed that his survival was due to the Blessed Virgin's intervention, and that the Third Secret had predicted the attack on him. John Paul donated the bullet that hit him to Fatima, and it was inserted into the crown adorning a statue of Mary there. *BBC News, 12 May; D.Mirror, 13 May; Sunday Times, Sunday Express, 14 May 2017.*

• On his way back to Rome from Fatima, Pope Francis was asked about reports of continuing apparitions of the BVM at the Medjugorje shrine in southern Bosnia. He said the visions "don't have much value" even if the shrine itself helps Catholics find God. Unlike Fatima or Lourdes, the Medjugorje phenomena have never been declared authentic, in part because local bishops have long cast doubt on the reliability and interests of the "seers". Starting in June 1981, six young people reported seeing visions of the BVM [**FT38:20-22**]. Some have reported seeing visions ever since, with precise messages being delivered at pre-designated times, feeding a suspicion that their claims were aimed at luring religious tourists to the otherwise unremarkable rural spot. *[AP] 15 May 2017.*

• Recent Vatican guidelines forbid many popular ways of commemorating the dead, from scattering ashes at sea to having them turned into jewellery or put in a locket, dismissing them as New Age practices and "pantheism". A formal instruction, issued by the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith (CDF) and approved by Pope Francis, forbids Catholics from keeping the ashes of loved ones in an urn at home, other than in (unspecified) "grave and exceptional circumstances". It also rules out the practice of dividing people's ashes between members of the family. Such practices are thought to reflect non-Christian ideas about "fusion with Mother Nature". The Catholic Church only lifted the ban on cremation in 1963. The new guidance accepts cremation in principle but restricts increasingly varied uses for ashes, insisting they should only be kept in a "sacred place" such as a cemetery. *D.Telegraph, 26 Oct 2016.*

MYTHCONCEPTIONS

by Mat Coward

213: SQUEEZEE

The myth

Boa constrictors kill their prey by *squeeeezing* them to death, gradually tightening the coils until the victim can no longer breathe.

The "truth"

It's been known for a long time that the suffocation model of constricting – in which each time the prey exhales, the boa tightens its grip, until it's impossible for the prey to inhale – didn't fit the facts. For one thing, observation showed that death usually took place too quickly for it to be due to asphyxiation. It also wouldn't be an efficient method: the snake would expend far too much energy in such a gradual process, while the struggling prey would have time to try to escape or fight back. The snake would itself be vulnerable to attack by predators while it was thus preoccupied. Recent research has come up with a new solution. It's now believed that the boa squeezes its dinner – typically a rodent – hard enough to prevent the flow of blood to vital organs. The prey dies, not of suffocation, but of a circulatory arrest. This can be achieved within a minute, as opposed to the several minutes which asphyxiation would require.

Sources

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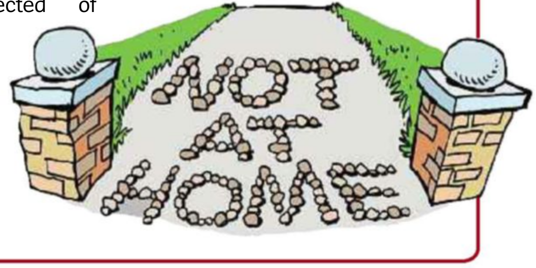
Disclaimer

Do let us know if any of this is inaccurate; just write to the letters page, and I'm sure they'll squeeze it in somehow.

Mythchaser

We've mentioned "burglar's signs" before [**FT151:26, 333:23**]. The latest variation comes from Portishead, near Bristol, where "Police have stepped up patrols after mysterious rocks were left outside homes and under the wheels of cars," supposedly in order to "work out which homes are empty during the day". The local Neighbourhood Watch has urged residents to "stay vigilant". The aforementioned mysterious rocks, or stones, are white, as is the slim, tall, pale, van driver, with long mousey hair and a goatee beard, suspected of involvement. Well, what other explanation could there possibly be for pebbles on a driveway? (*Western Daily Press*, 12 May 2017).



IT'S STILL WEIRD UP NORTH!

ROB GANDY reports on Weird Weekend North 2017

ROB GANDY

The second Weird Weekend North took place on 1-2 April 2017, once again in Rixton-with-Glazebrook, near Warrington. Glen Vaudrey had organised a varied and thought-provoking programme, which this year benefited from the surreal introductions of Barry Tadcaster (aka Richard Freeman) and Ken Jeavons, the Orang Pendek, who had teleported from CFZ Weird Weekend in Devon.

Saturday's first speaker, Tommy Skelton, dropped out at short notice, and so I stepped in to deliver his talk on "Photos of the phantom white rabbit of Crank". The photos showed that the phantom was... an April Fool. Yes, Glen and I had planned this for several months, using a genuine local legend, with a series of puzzling pictures leading to a fluffy white bunny holding an "April Fool" sign. The audience enjoyed the joke, and were taken through a presentation based on my article about forteana and April Fool hoaxes (**FT352:28-33**).

Steve Mera told us how his Phenomena Project television show (www.phenomenaproject.tv/) would stand out in a saturated market by conducting potentially groundbreaking experiments, and he showed some startling recordings of inexplicable audio and visual phenomena, some from "locked-off" cameras with motion detectors.

Alan Murdie tackled the controversial subject of ghosts and sexuality. While links between prepubescent girls and poltergeist activity are well-documented, there was increasing evidence that sometimes it is older women who were unhappy, and possibly sexually and/or emotionally frustrated, who were poltergeist agents. He quoted Nandor Fodor and referred to Freudian analysis, giving details of a number of illustrative cases.

Rob Whitehead highlighted cases from across the world in which children had collectively witnessed UFOs at school, and challenged prevailing attitudes towards the testimonies of these children. He drew particularly on three cases: Westall, Melbourne, Australia, 1966; Broad Haven Primary School, Pembrokeshire, 1977; and Ariel School, Ruwa, Zimbabwe (1994; see **FT347:24**). Of particular interest were filmed interviews with some of the Westall children who were now adults but stuck firmly to their original testimonies.

Steve Jones's tour of ritual combat games began with the Haxey Hood, which takes place on 6 January, Old Christmas Day (see **FT336:6-7, 349:38-41**). The "hood" is actually a piece of rope bound in leather that is fought over by two local teams. Steve drew parallels between the 13 referees and Jesus and his apostles, with the Fool arguably representing Judas Iscariot. The tradition of "hanging the Fool" – symbolising Judas's suicide, with the Fool suspended over smouldering straw – was terminated in 1957 after the Fool caught fire. Other games included: the Jedburgh Ball Game (which allegedly began using an Englishman's head as a football); Hallaton's Bottle Kicking and Hare Pie Scramble on Easter Monday; the Pace Egg Play in Heptonstall on Good Friday; the Abbots Bromley Horn Dance (see **FT336:26-33**); and Hunting the Earl of Rone in Combe Martin. Steve concluded by describing Marsden's Cuckoo Festival and its biannual Imbolc Fire Festival, featuring a contest between larger-than-life figures of Jack Frost and the Green Man.

Jackie Tonks talked about Bigfoot in the Pacific North West, and described how she had moved from scepticism to being 90 per cent convinced of the creature's reality. Her change of mind was based on talks with native tribes, who considered it a real animal, lots of positive photographic evidence, and actually having a first-hand encounter with something that crossed her path.

WEIRD WEEKEND
NORTH
2017

Glen Vaudrey closed the day with a thought-provoking presentation about zooforms – entities outwardly resembling animals, but supernatural rather than corporeal. He offered plausible explanations for some – including scary black bin bags – but described several bizarre examples that suggest there might be 'something' with the ability to appear in the forms that it *wants* us to see. He referred to people who had given presentations on zooform phenomena and then (allegedly) been attacked by zooform creatures; would he appear the following day we wondered…

Mick Walters opened Sunday's session with an eclectic tour of weirdness in Staffordshire, which encompassed UFOs, ghosts of German soldiers, chatty spectres in Burslem, faceless moorland phantoms, werewolves, and the fabled Pigman of Pye Green, before concluding with the story of a cursed Bronze Age sword.

Steve Mera next detailed UFOs through the ages, describing many religious connotations linked to the mystery and presenting lots of purported UFO images in mediæval and Renaissance paintings. Nowadays, it is difficult to accept UFO photographs at face value because hoaxers have better software than those examining the images. Finally, he emphasised how often secret military aircraft have been mistaken for UFOs over the years.

The indefatigable Richard Freeman took the audience through his search for the Mongolian Death Worm (see **FT211:40-44**), gathering witness testimony that suggested there might be two types: a 2ft (60cm), reddish-brown, sausage-shaped creature and an 18ft (5.5m) grey, worm-like one. They are supposed to come out after rain, and are much feared, reputedly killing by spitting venom.

Following a fun fortean quiz (the winners received Death Worms (not real ones), the losers Cthulhu colouring books), I presented a selection of first- and second-hand accounts of motorbike-related phantom hitchhikers and road ghosts, starting at one end of the River Mersey in Stockport and ending at the other in Liverpool's Wallasey Tunnel, via Hatfield and Leicestershire.

Finally Bob Fischer talked about Hobmen (see **FT330:58-59**), primarily in his native North Yorkshire. Hobmen were hairy little house spirits attached to farms, who did menial tasks. They could be benevolent or malevolent, and were similar to fairy-type beings across Europe. There was widespread belief in them prior to the 19th century, but tales could go back over 1,000 years and may have been brought over with the Vikings.

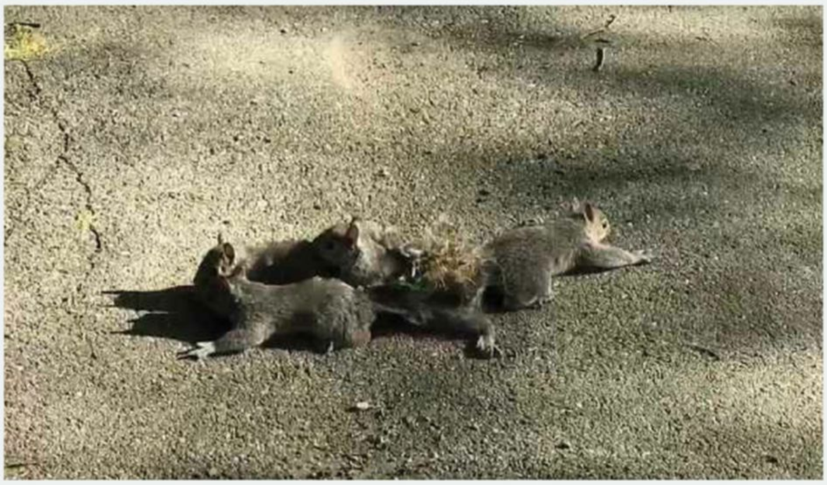
As well as the talks there were stalls and activities: Glen Vaudrey's bookstall, *FT*'s Hunt Emerson drawing caricatures and Megalithic Tours offering fortean-flavoured holidays; and I gathered "It Happened To Me" experiences from audience members (see pp*-* this issue).

WWN 2018 is scheduled for 7-8 April 2018, so put the date in your diary and look for updates at: http://glenvaudrey.wix.com/weird-weekend-north.

ALIEN ZOO

NEWS FROM THE WORLD OF CRYPTOZOOLOGY

KARL SHUKER watches the first squirrel king caught on film and welcomes a winged cat



COURTESY OF ANDREW DAY

LEFT: The squirrel king filmed by Andrew Day. **BELOW**: Mike, Moravia's winged cat.

A SQUIRREL KING ON FILM

Rat kings and squirrel kings are famous if exceedingly rare rodent aggregations whose unfortunate members, often still alive when encountered, are inextricably – and inexplicably – bound to one another via a Gordian-like intertwining of their tails. Their occurrence has never been satisfactorily explained, but this is not really surprising, because, after all, how *can* their tails have become so hideously, inseparably entwined whilst the creatures are actually alive? Although several such monstrosities have been preserved and retained in museums as major curiosities, and a fair few photographs and even some X-rays of them also exist, as far as I am aware no example has ever been filmed while still in the living state – until 21 May 2017, that is. For this was when 41-year-old Andrew Day, gazing out of a window at his parents' home in Bangor, Maine, USA, spotted what looked initially like a cat attacking an injured squirrel, squirming and writhing as if in pain on the pavement nearby. When Day went outside to take a closer look, however, he was amazed to discover that it was actually four baby squirrels bound to one another by their intertwined tails – a sight so bizarre that he videoed it on his mobile phone.

After scaring off a real cat that seemed ready to pounce upon them, Day and his father then donned protective gloves and, armed with scissors, spent an hour and a half carefully snipping away tangled hair and associated debris (pieces of twigs and straw) from these squirrels' tails, which he later described as resembling "a giant dreadlock", until the constrained quartet were finally separated from one another. When released, they immediately fled to a tree close by, in which an adult squirrel, presumably their mother, was waiting for them. The fact that their entangled tail hair contained twig and straw fragments suggested that the knotting had occurred while they were still in their nest. Moreover, the length of time that it had taken for them to be disentangled shows just how difficult, if not nigh on impossible, it would be for such aggregations to be created artificially, i.e. by someone deliberately trying to knot together the tails of living squirrels (or rats) to yield a 'king' – as has been suggested by some as an explanation for these anomalies – and especially as previously documented living 'kings' have generally contained more, sometimes many more, than a mere four individuals. Day's video of the squirrel king that he rescued and separated can presently be viewed on YouTube.

http://actoutwithaislinn.bangordailynews.com/2017/05/22/recreation/four-baby-squirrels-with-tails-tangled-together-rescued-by-bangor-men/ 22 May 2017. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vDbs-0b8zAU 21 May 2017.

A WINGED MOGGIE FROM MORAVIA

It's been quite a while since I last reported a winged cat, so I'm delighted to learn of the following new example from Moravia in the Czech Republic, courtesy of Czech friend and correspondent Miroslav 'Mirek' Fišmeister. Publicised during May 2017 by the Czech media, the cat in question is known as Mike, and has been looked after for the past year by the Semrad family from Vržanov, a small Moravian village near the city of Jihlava on the border of Moravia and Bohemia. Until recently, Mike had sported a very dense coat that outwardly rendered him just like any other such cat, but when he shed it the hitherto unsuspected presence of a pair of long furry 'wings' was revealed, sprouting from his flanks just in front of his haunches. Moreover, whereas some such appendages are in reality nothing more than clumps of unshed matted fur, in Mike's case his wings are apparently sensitive to touch, contain cartilage, and are still growing, according to various bemused scientists who have examined him. Consequently, it has been suggested that perhaps they represent externally visible indications of an otherwise concealed, internal twin, one that did not develop and separate normally during embryogeny.

Although many cases of so-called parasitic twins are indeed known from a wide range of animals, including humans, it is far more likely that the correct explanation for Mike's wings is that they are the result of feline cutaneous asthenia (FCA), a rare genetic condition that causes the skin of those individuals exhibiting it to be abnormally stretchable, readily yielding wing-like extensions of skin if the cat rubs its back or flanks against an object or attempts to groom its body with its paws. Back in the early 1990s, I was the first person to propose FCA as the explanation for classic winged cat cases, and this has since been confirmed by veterinary experts with a number of such specimens, as I have documented in various of my writings, including several *FT* articles on winged cats. An excellent video of Mike displaying his wings is contained in the online Czech news report cited by me here.

http://tn.nova.cz/clanek/kocour-ma-na-zadech-podivne-vyrustky-jsou-to-kridla-video.html 25 May 2017.

NECROLOG

This month, we bid adieu to two notable chancers: the failed painter who made an art of drawing money and a self-proclaimed inventor who conned the Beatles.

JSG BOGGS

Boggs was born Stephen Litzner and adopted by Jim Boggs and his wife Marlene, who renamed him James Stephen George, and he found fame as “JSG Boggs”. Marlene (born Marlene Dietrich Hildebrandt) was a carnival performer who toured as “Margo Queen of the Jungle”, and when not growing up in the middle class safety of Florida, young Boggs often accompanied her on tour. He started as an abstract painter but no one seemed interested and for several years he struggled, even taking part-time work in a blood bank, before hitting on the idea of drawing money. From the day in 1984 when he offered a $1 bill drawn on a napkin for a cup of coffee and a doughnut in a Chicago diner, Boggs’s transactions were designed (he claimed) to stimulate debate about how we value art – and why something as insubstantial as paper money is credited with having value at all.

Refusing to sell his drawings to collectors, Boggs sought to find hoteliers, restaurateurs, shopkeepers and the like who would accept his drawings in lieu of cash, as part of choreographed transactions which began with his announcing that he was an artist, and inviting his creditor to “enjoin with me to make an artistic transaction – to accept my notes for their face value to pay this bill”. If the recipient proved willing, they would be asked to complete the process by issuing a receipt and proper change.

Boggs never claimed that his “notes” were the real thing. One note could take 10 hours to create, using the finest-tip green and black pens. His detailed renderings were only ever drawn on one side of paper and close scrutiny would reveal tiny inscriptions such as “JSG Boggs, Secretary of the Measury”; “I promise to promise to promise”; “The Bank of Boggs”; “In Fun We Trust”; and “This is legal art for all those who agree, see?” The bank name might be “Federal Reserve Not” or “Kunstbank of Bohemia”. The plate serial number might be “EMC2” or “LSD”.

Boggs would then sell the change, the receipt, and sometimes the goods he had purchased as his “artwork”, and if the collector wanted the “note” as well, Boggs would tell him where he had spent it – usually to the financial benefit of its original recipient. The resulting “transaction” pieces – framed compilations of drawing, receipt, change and so on – could fetch many thousands of dollars and his work was acquired by institutions from the British Museum to the Smithsonian Institution and the Museum of Modern Art in New York. One Boggs note was reportedly resold for $420,000.

Boggs reckoned he was successful in persuading people to accept his drawings about 60 per cent of the time and he always had most success in Europe. In Britain, where he lived for about 10 years, he used his drawings to pay the rent on a bedsit in Hampstead. In 1987, when he had his first exhibition at the Young Unknowns gallery in south London, Boggs was arrested and tried at the Old Bailey on four counts of “unauthorised reproduction” of banknotes under the Forgery and Counterfeiting Act. For four days, The Bank of England v Boggs was front-page news and Boggs took full advantage of the publicity. The bank, he protested, was “a threat to the freedom of artistic expression… it’s like having the KGB on your butt.”

During the trial, in which he was represented by Geoffrey Robertson QC, his defence was simple: When Renoir painted a nude, he did not reproduce a woman. When Boggs painted British money, he had not reproduced a pound note. “*These* are reproductions,” Boggs claimed, waving a fistful of real pound notes into the air; “These, by contrast,” he continued, brandishing his own drawings, “are original”. The jury found him not guilty on all counts and he paid his legal team in drawings. In his book *The Justice Game* (1998), Geoffrey Robertson observed that, as a result of the Boggs case, all Bank of England notes now carry a copyright message, the idea being that if they cannot secure a counterfeiting charge, then they can at least secure a copyright violation.

In 1989, Boggs was arrested while on holiday in Australia and thrown to jail. Not only was he found not guilty, but the courts awarded him $20,000 in real money in compensation. The US Secret Service raided Boggs’s studio in Pittsburgh three times between 1990 and 1992 and confiscated 1,300 items (which they never returned). Despite several hearings in the courts and what Boggs described as a “full-blown, analyse-you-down-to-your-hair-follicles audit” in 1995, he was never charged.

As he became famous Boggs found himself plagued by artists who had taken to forging his work; there was even a collector in Chicago who had started specialising in bogus Boggs notes, prompting Boggs to wonder if he might get in on the act by counterfeiting his own work. Following Boggs’s death, Lawrence Weschler, author of *Boggs: A Comedy of Values* (Univ. Of Chicago Press, 1999), said the artist was “just short of being a con man – but no more so than anyone else in the art world, or for that matter in the world of finance – which, of course, is the whole point.”

Stephen Litzner, aka JSG Boggs, conceptual artist, born Woodbury, NJ 16 Jan 1955; died Tampa, FL 22 Jan 2017, aged 62.

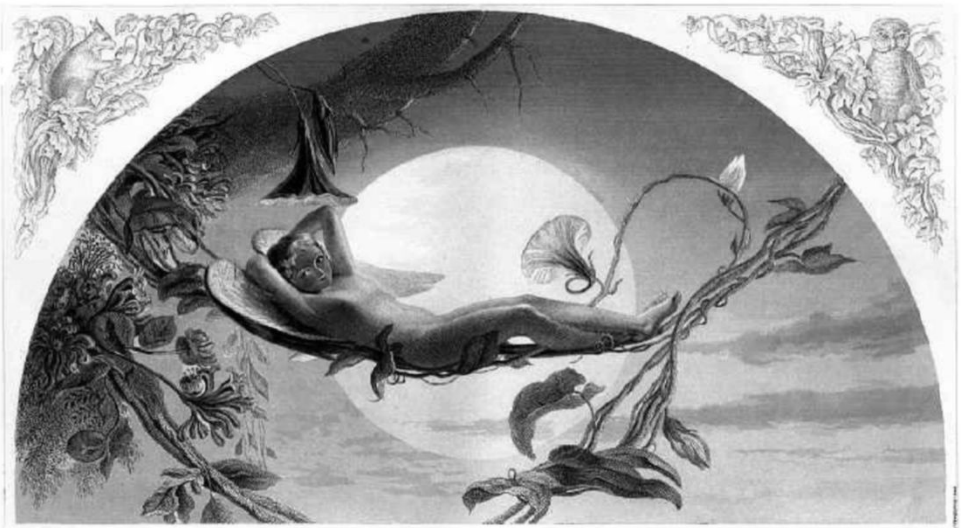
MAGIC ALEX

Alexis Mardas, a self-proclaimed electronic genius known to fans as 'Magic Alex', moved to London from Greece in 1965 and worked as a TV repair man. He exhibited 'kinetic light sculptures' at the Indica Gallery, one of which was bought by the Rolling Stones. Brian Jones introduced Magic Alex to John Lennon, who was dazzled by his patter. Mardas produced a 'Nothing Box' (containing flashing coloured lights), which Lennon would stare at for hours while tripping on acid.

In 1968 Mardas was appointed head of Apple Electronics at Apple Corps. The Beatles bankrolled a lab in which he installed an array of pulsating, bleeping electronic gadgetry. He promised to construct a force field round Lennon's house and planned to build a flying saucer using the engines from Lennon's Rolls and Harrison's Ferrari. He promised X-ray cameras, houses that floated on air and a hovering electronic sun. The sun never shone, and of the 100 odd patents applied for, none was accepted and nothing was ever produced.

The Beatles commissioned him to build a 72-track studio in the basement of Apple's Savile Row offices, but when they turned up to record *Let It Be*, they found – in George Harrison's words – "the biggest disaster of all time". The mixing desk looked like it had been built with a hammer and chisel, there was no soundproofing, no intercom and no proper wiring between the control room and the 16 speakers fixed randomly to the walls. Mardas vanished from the scene and the following year the Beatles' new manager Allen Klein closed Apple Electronics.

Yanni Alexis Mardas, aka 'Magic Alex', self-styled inventor, born Athens 2 May 1942; died 13 Jan 2017, aged 74.



FAIRIES, FOLKLORE AND FORTEANA

SIMON YOUNG FILES A NEW REPORT FROM THE INTERFACE OF STRANGE PHENOMENA AND FOLK BELIEF

FLY FAIRY

There follow three particularly interesting transatlantic spirit flights, from the 18th and 19th centuries, all told in such a way as to suggest something lived (or imagined) rather than a folk story.

One, from the 18th century, sees a man flown from Breconshire in Wales to Philadelphia in Pennsylvania by a ghost, and then back again: the account is recorded by Edmund Jones, whose 'apparitions' are the rawest recorded from Enlightenment Britain.

A second, from the early 19th century, sees a man from Prince Edward Island in Atlantic Canada rushed through the air by the fairies and taken to Europe: he also is brought immediately back to a party he had been hosting. This was written up in the *Prince Edward Island Magazine* (1902).

A third, also from the early 19th century, sees a man picked up from County Fermanagh by Irish fairies and taken to America: he is landed on the roof of a house there and allowed to look down the chimney, where he glimpses his daughter, who had emigrated; he then visits a friend, before being brought back, once again, to Ireland. The collector was Walter Y Evans Wentz and the account appeared in his book *The Fairy-Faith in Celtic Countries* (1911).

In each of these three stories, someone crossed the Atlantic: two east to west, one west to east. And, in all three cases, the flier was accompanied and, indeed, powered by a supernatural force. In all three cases, we also know how long the trip took. The Welsh ghost needed three days to bring her victim to Philadelphia, where she obliged him to carry out a trifling task on her behalf: throwing a cursed box in a lake. Say 36 hours in, 36 hours out? No wonder that the young man who was taken over the ocean "could hardly speak" at the end of his journey: he had also been thrown into a river for disobeying the ghost. The Irish fairies took a night to get to the US and to return. The Prince Edward Island fairies managed, meanwhile, their trip to Europe and back in just over four hours, which are Concorde speeds: they also repeatedly dunked their human passenger in the ocean as they flew, apparently just for kicks.

THE FAIRIES REPEATEDLY DUNKED THEIR HUMAN PASSENGER IN THE OCEAN, APPARENTLY JUST FOR KICKS

There are other accounts of transatlantic spirit flights (though these come from folk tales, rather than stories that appear to be personal experiences) where flight time is measured. An Irish ghost, based in a US cemetery, took just 45 minutes to get to his family in Ireland; whereas Irish fairies, bringing a human friend to play soccer in New York (the mind boggles), needed only "a second". The conclusion to take away from all this is surely, if you want to travel rapidly, fly fairy.

Simon Young writes on folklore and history and runs www.fairyist.com

Flying saucers against capitalism

PETER BROOKESMITH surveys the latest fads and flaps from the world of ufological research

FROM BEYOND THE FRINGE...

True to his word, MJ Banias has continued his series on how ufology threatens capitalism (see **FT354:26**) and *ergo* why ufology remains an unserious subject for 'the establishment', which of course is so suffused with the assumptions of capitalism that it doesn't know it. Vast swathes of the Left, who are more part of the establishment than perhaps they care to admit, might nonetheless be rather offended by that. However, one curious bit about Banias's sidelong look at ufology is that in seemingly talking up its allegedly "purely democratic" nature, he exposes how batty it is, and reveals why only ufologists take ufology very seriously.

But before we get to that, I'll take issue with the initial proposal that ufology is "purely democratic". Democracy as invented in ancient Athens was an egalitarian mechanism for making decisions, each citizen having a vote and a voice of his own in the assembly. Democracy as we know it in the West is also a means to make decisions about things that affect our lives, although in various ways we delegate the actual decision-making – the power – to elected representatives, who in turn are subject to the internal power-structures of political parties. Observing this democracy-at-several-removes with dry eyes led the late Viscount Hailsham (1907–2001) to describe modern democracy as an "elective dictatorship".

In contrast, ufology is no more democratic than a swarm of midges, albeit often as irritating. Ufology as a whole (and Banias is right to say that means *everything* within it, "from reasoned logic to utter madness", not just the bits you like), and as we know it, makes no decisions at all. It certainly hasn't decided to be anti- or extra-capitalist; as a body, ufology is incapable of making decisions. It is "a wild west of ideologies where anything and everything goes", as Banias says, and because of "this ideological freedom, UFO discourse and debate is an example of a living and functioning discourse that counters modern ideological Capital". There is a grain of sense in this, in that ufology doesn't function along broadly agreed lines, and its anarchic 'discourse' would be less than helpful in organising the proverbial piss-up in a brewery, let alone running the brewery itself. Which incompetence is certainly counter to capitalism. But as such, ufology would be an equally useless contributor to whatever form of non-capitalist utopia you can think of – some of which wouldn't take very long to shoot, hang, stone or incarcerate the lot of them.

LEFT: Should ufologists be worried that their field may go the way of glaciology?

MARTIN BERNETTI / AFP / GETTY IMAGES

Most ufologists are old, white, male, and hang out in the notoriously racist, misogynist, militaristic West

Thus Banias is seriously off-course when he asserts: "It is the very nature, the fluidity, of UFO discourse that calls modern Capital into question." It doesn't, though, because it doesn't, even implicitly, offer a pragmatic alternative model of economic and social organisation, even in principle, let alone as a blueprint – not that they've ever been much practical use, or even humane. And exactly what Banias means by capitalism and "capitalist ideology" he doesn't say. Ayn Rand maintained that pure capitalism has never been tried, which is nearly true, but also probably just as well. Banias also digs himself into some mire by quoting Noam Chomsky's confused proposition that capitalism and democracy are incompatible (tell that to the ancient Athenians). And so it makes no sense for Banias to say that ufologists "dabble in objects and ideas that pose a direct threat to the hegemonic thought system Capitalism generates." Banias should attend a board meeting of a large company sometime, and observe how 'hegemonic' is the thinking of its members. But anyway. These are the kinds of reasons he proposes that capitalists have ensured that ufology must live on the fringe, "as a taboo subject, laughed at by popular media, and purposefully alienated by the elites who dwell within the halls of power". It doesn't occur to him that ufology is discreetly ignored and quietly mocked because most of it is indeed cacophonous, (self-) contradictory and, outside psychosocial commentary, has achieved precisely nothing in its seven decades of delusion and incompetence. And that's just to deal with the second part of his argument. For the third, you can visit http://www.terraobscura.net/blog/part-3-feeling-alienated, and decide for yourself how skew-wiff Banias's outlook is. Or isn't.

...TO BEHIND THE FRIDGE

Ufologists, for all their frustrations, do have something to be thankful for. The feminists haven't come after them – yet. In a way this is surprising, given that the vast majority of ufologists are old, white, male, and hang out in the notoriously racist, misogynist, militaristic (&c &c) West and are therefore surely in need of severe correction, a radical dose of identity politics and perhaps a lashing of intersectionality. Now consider glaciology. An innocent pursuit, you may think – people poking about, doing a spot of mountaineering maybe, taking samples, ice cores, and measurements, reporting their findings.

No way is it innocent, according to Mark Carey, M Jackson, Alessandro Antonello and Jaclyn Rushing in "Glaciers, gender, and science: A feminist framework for global environmental change research" in *Progress in Human Geography*, Vol 40 (6), Jan 2016, pp770–93. From the abstract: "This paper thus proposes a feminist glaciology framework.... Merging feminist postcolonial science studies and feminist political ecology, the feminist glaciology framework generates robust analysis of gender, power, and epistemologies in dynamic social-ecological systems, thereby leading to more just and equitable science and human-ice interactions." I wish there were space to quote more. But from here it goes downhill rather faster than your average river of ice, in a 24-page mish-mash of post-modernist cant and mostly unhinged assertions. So, ufologists, while you're watching the skies, watch your back too, because sooner or later some crazed academic axe-grinder will be along to denounce you for what you are. Or rather, are not.

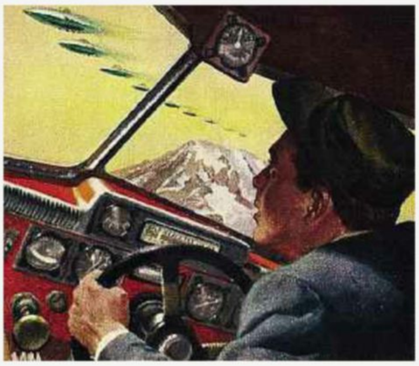
The view from the cockpit

JENNY RANDLES looks at some close encounters that recall Kenneth Arnold's 1947 sighting

When Kenneth Arnold saw a strange formation of 'aircraft' over the Cascade Mountains of the western USA on 24 June 1947 (see **FT137:34-39**) he innocently set in motion a modern mystery that still grips the imagination 70 years later. As we mark the anniversary, it's worth remembering something: Arnold saw his UFOs from an unusual vantage point. He was not on the ground looking up at the heavens as in the vast majority of cases. He was in the cockpit of a small aircraft flying solo across hazardous terrain in search of a missing aviator. From here he saw the now infamous formation of objects 'bouncing' through the sky and giving birth to the image of the 'flying saucer'.

I thought it might be interesting to look at other cases involving light aircraft to see what they reveal about how the UFO mystery has evolved since 1947. One of my first sightings involved something like this in 1969. I was working at Manchester Airport on a summer holiday job, collecting the fares for a company which gave pleasure flights in an old Auster. I made a few flights in the tiny plane and it let me experience something of what it must have been like for Kenneth Arnold 22 years earlier.

A decade later a sighting happened in the area where I then lived, close to Barton Aerodrome in Salford. It was 11 December 1979 at 11.45am when a flying instructor was tutoring a young pupil aboard a Cessna 150, call sign Whisky Echo. They had flown over my house in Irlam, heading across the M62 and north towards Bolton. The pupil was flying the aircraft and being monitored by the instructor, who spotted something strange up ahead. It appeared to come out of cloud above Winter Hill where a powerful TV mast was located. The Cessna was at 4,500ft (1,370m) at this point but the object seemed much lower. It was clearly solid as it passed in and out of cloud and the instructor initially assumed it was another light aircraft. Paying careful attention to the object he asked the pupil to bank in order to minimise any risk of a collision, as the UFO was now close enough to pose a threat. The pupil was able to see the object at this point after it had emerged from another clump of cloud. By now it was pulling away in an arc described as a "well controlled swooping motion". The experienced instructor said it was a solid ball of white light like a very large tennis ball, and he measured its altitude as about 2,500ft – so 2,000ft (760-610m) below them.



LEFT: A 1952 depiction of Arnold's sighting.

Kenneth Arnold was in the cockpit of a small aircraft flying across hazardous terrain

At that time I investigated local cases with my colleague Ron Sargeant. He worked at the airfield and flew regularly from there, so he knew the aircraft, the witnesses and the route. We considered the possibility that sunlight reflecting off a bird such as a seagull had created the phenomenon (this was a likely explanation for one of the earliest films taken of a UFO at Tremonton, Utah, in 1952). However, that idea was not to survive the investigation, as weather and sunlight levels were not supportive. Plus, the instructor had seen no such effect from known birds or similar objects on the flight, and at close proximity he had little doubt that this was some kind of solid object.

Over the years there have been a number of reports from the ground of unusual small craft flying over this part of the Pennines and there have long been suspicions that they are experimental technology that has been under development in local aerospace plants. These days we would likely regard a case where a small constructed object flew near to a light aircraft as a possible close encounter with a 'drone'. These are now used widely for recreation and aerial surveying and in recent years have led to several near misses with commercial jets heading into major airports. How serious such a collision might be is as yet untested, but with a smaller propeller-driven light aircraft the risks are likely enhanced.

Although drones of the type sold in hobby shops today did not exist 40 years ago it is not impossible that some covert experimental technology was under development. Indeed the UK was one of the leading pioneers in this area of research so it would be a surprise if this was *not* the cause of a few UFO encounters made at close quarters from inside another aircraft.

Another case from that same era, investigated by Omar Fowler of BUFORA, puts that into much sharper focus and has many comparisons with the Barton episode. Just weeks before that event, on at 2.40pm on 27 August 1979, another Cessna 150, call sign November X-Ray, had left Blackbushe Airfield in Surrey with a flying instructor aboard. He was taking Lieutenant James Plastow, from Sandhurst Military College, on his pilot's licence test. They were at 2,000ft (610m) when the instructor suddenly grabbed the controls from his student and threw the Cessna into a steep bank and descent to evade what he judged a risk of collision. That was proven fully justified as an object sped past the front of the aircraft, coming within a few feet of the windscreen. This, of course, allowed them a very good view of what had almost hit them. The rotating object was about a foot in diameter, like a doughnut in shape, reflected light with a bright silvery glow "like a blob of mercury" and was close enough to reveal that its surface seemed to be made up of a series of 'honeycomb'-like cells. The instructor called Blackbushe to say that the object was 'tagging' the Cessna, flying around them in a terrifying cat-and-mouse chase. He was wrestling the controls, twisting and turning to avoid a collision, until the thing flew underneath them and then streaked upwards and away to about 3,000ft (914m). It appeared to be under remote control: they even saw a hint of an aerial on the side. I think the big clue here is that another Blackbushe pilot had a more distant view of what seems to have been the same object the following day. It was heading off in the direction of Farnborough – the home of much advanced aircraft technology and experimental devices. Most likely this was an early kind of RPV – Remotely Piloted Vehicle – as now commonly used in war zones for surveillance in dangerous terrain where lives would be at risk if manned aircraft were used.

When Kenneth Arnold saw those first flying saucers over the Cascade Mountains in June 1947 he was not thinking of alien visitors but suspected they were some new kind of aero technology (see pp46-49 for some of the suspects). So, perhaps very little has changed over seven decades.

BLASTS FROM THE PAST

FORTEAN TIMES BRINGS YOU THE NEWS THAT TIME FORGOT

69 THE TELEPORT BEFORE FORT

THEO PAIJMANS finds a surprising early example of a fortean coinage in a Victorian precursor of *The Fly*.

In 1906 German occultist Franz Hartmann expressed his puzzlement over a strange phenomenon: "…the most astounding and perplexing [examples]… are evidenced in cases where people in their natural bodies have suddenly disappeared in one place and in an incredibly short space of time been found in another distant place, which they could not have reached by ordinary means." Since it did not have a name, he suggested one: "To such cases the name of 'magical metathesis' or transposition may be given; because as far as we know, the change of locality is usually not made by one's own efforts but by the aid of superior powers unknown to those who are subjected to it."[1]

> "Some portions of the currents must have gone by the wrong wires, for the man and dog were mixed!"

A quarter of a century later Charles Fort introduced a new name for the phenomenon in *Lo!*, his third book. Fort writes: "Mostly in this book I shall specialize upon indications that there exists a transportory force that I shall call *Teleportation.*"[2] His proposal caught on. *Lo!* was widely reviewed and the American newspapers jumped on the new word. Since then, Fort is generally credited for having coined it.[3] Surprisingly, a much older example was unearthed recently of a near-similar word used in a similar context. It appeared on 6 March 1878 in the pages of the *Times of India* in a tale of teleportation with a matter transmitter, under the heading: "The Teleport: The Most Remarkable Invention Of The Age".

In it an anonymous writer claims that a Mr Chinchpooglyjee Chowpattyjee from Bombay had invented an apparatus "by which *man can be reduced to infinitesimal atoms, transmitted through the wire, and reproduced safe and sound at the other end!*" How "this most remarkable disintegration" works must remain secret until his invention is patented, but a description of the device is given: "The apparatus… – of which four sets have been made – consists of a powerful battery, a metal disc nine inches diameter by half an inch thick, insulated from the ground by four ordinary telegraph insulators, a curiously constructed bell-shaped glass house reaching from the ground to about six feet high by three feet wide and three feet deep, at the apex of which is an iron funnel, six inches diameter at the mouth and tapering away outside for about 18 inches, until it becomes of a diameter of a quarter of an inch. The wire along which the experiment is to be made is fastened into this end by a screw. Round the funnel is wound coil upon coil of fine silk-covered wire. The ends of this wire are carried into Mr Chinchpooglyjee's private room, into which we were not allowed to enter, as here are contained the portions of his apparatus which he wishes, at present, to keep secret."

Demonstrations follow. "Four glass houses were set up, two at one side of the compound, A and B, and two at the other side, C and D: A was connected by wire with C, and B with D." A dog is placed on the metal disc in A, and the inventor applies a powerful current to the under side of the disc. The dog changes size and becomes vapour-like and disappears in a matter of seconds to reappear in house C. "Now we will try *man*", the inventor says, and a boy is placed in the glass dome of B: "The current was again applied to the under part of the disc, and the same effect was observed as with the dog. The house was instantaneously filled with a vaporous man whose features and parts were quite distinct until they disappeared… In 15 seconds Pedro was gone. Running over to D there we found him grinning more than ever." A final demonstration is given and those familiar with the story of *The Fly* know what to expect: "Mr. Chinchpooglyjee said he would now send both man and dog at the same time through the two wires, from C and D back to A and B." As the inventor applies the current, a terrified bystander flees the scene, accidentally knocking the wires off the wooden pegs from which they are suspended: "…on our return to A and B we saw with horror the mischief the unhappy man had caused. In falling, the wires must have been in contact for the fraction of a second, and some portions of the currents must have gone by the wrong wires, for *the man and the dog were mixed!* On the hindquarters of the dog was an unmistakable black human nose, and from the face of poor Pedro hung a tail – a tail which was still wagging. The horror and excitement caused us to lose consciousness at this point, and when we recovered we beheld a well-known surgeon holding with one hand a cruel looking knife and with the other trying to steady the still wagging tail. We spare our readers the details…" The story ends with the assurance that the inventor is confident that his system will transmit bodies to any distance, "and that by improved apparatus he will shortly be able to send a fully developed man to England, through the various sections of the sub-marine cable in less than four and a half minutes…" [4]

The fantastic account, which was reprinted in other newspapers, [5] may have been inspired by the very first teleportation story involving a matter transmitter, 'The Man Without a Body' which was published just a year before in the *Sun,* a newspaper from New York. This story was printed without a by-line as well, but its writer was Edward Page Mitchell, the later editor-in-chief of the *Sun*. In his story we meet professor Dummkopf, the German word for 'stupid', who now is but a shrivelled head in a glass case. The professor has discovered "the great secret of the transmission of atoms", and has given the name "The Telepomp" to his method of dissolving a body into atoms by way of "chemical affinity or by a sufficiently strong electric current". The professor tests the device on himself: "I began to disintegrate at my feet and slowly disappeared under my own eyes. My legs melted away, and then my trunk and arms. That something was wrong, I knew from the exceeding slowness of my dissolution, but I was helpless. Then my head went and I lost all consciousness… I recovered consciousness. I opened my eyes... My chin was materializing, and with great satisfaction I saw my neck slowly taking shape. Suddenly, and about at the third cervical vertebra, the process stopped. In a flash I knew the reason. I had forgotten to replenish the cups of my battery with fresh sulphuric acid, and there was not electricity enough to materialize the rest of me. I was a Head, but my body was Lord knows where." [6]

Mitchell, one of America's science fiction pioneers, also had a lifelong fascination with the supernatural. He wrote ghost stories and interviewed and befriended Madame Blavatsky, whom he nevertheless considered a fraud. [7] Edward Everett Hale, writer of *The Brick Moon* (1869), the first science fiction story involving an artificial satellite, was his onetime mentor. At the *Sun* one of his colleagues was Garett P Serviss who penned 'Edison's Conquest of Mars' (1898), where a disintegration ray invented by Edison defeats the Martians, who, we learn, also built the Sphinx. The ancient Egyptians developed an interplanetary matter transmitter thousands of years ago in Fred T Jane's *To Venus in Five Seconds* (1897). They used it to travel back and forth between the pyramids of Egypt and Central America but sometimes they ended up on Venus, due to interference with a similar matter transmitter technology of the Venusians. [8]

A teleportation resembling the procedure of 'The Teleport' is encountered in 'Prof. Vehr's Electrical Experiment', a short story by Robert Milne from 1885. It too features an enormous glass bell with "a marked resemblance to the known characteristics of a Leyden jar", into which the person is placed and electricity is applied. "I distinctly saw his form become thin, filmy and transparent it grew, till the attenuation was such that even the outline was scarcely visible… 'He has gone' whispered the professor, with subdued excitement…" It ends badly as well; the atoms of the man who was teleported to his lover as well as hers are dispersed in the ether on their way back. [9] Milne did not coin a name for the phenomenon, but Henry William Stacpoole did a year later. He called his teleportation method 'Teleporon' in his similarly titled story published in 1886.[10] The disintegration into a vapour-like substance that most of these stories feature is reminiscent of the earliest tale involving a teleportation, published in 1855. In it a man journeys to the Sun and visits its inhabitants by becoming mist-like: "My feelings at the moment of dissolution it would be impossible to describe. The molecules of my body partly separated, and became thin and vaporous. Cohesion, however, still feebly existed, and, curiously enough, my sensations were by no means unpleasant…" [11]

In these early tales, as well as in later stories such as *The Fly* or accounts of the 'Philadelphia Experiment', the teleportations often go haywire, echoing the erratic nature of Fort's universe, where people suddenly appear or disappear and anomalies unexpectedly come crashing down from the super-Sargasso sea. In addition to Hartmann's 'magical metathesis' or 'transposition', these early science fiction stories also introduced new words like Teleporon, Telepomp and Teleport.

The search for that one captivating expression or phrase to define the phenomenon went on for much longer, but in the end Fort coined the winning verb.

NOTES

1 Franz Hartmann, 'Magical Metathesis', *Occult Review*, Vol. IV, July-Dec, 1906, pp17-25.

2 Charles Fort, *Lo!*, Kendall, 1931, p27.

3 A cursory check shows that the word 'teleportation' does not appear before 1931 in American newspapers, the year *Lo!* Was published. As to Fort coining the word, see: Bob Rickard and John Michell, *Phenomena,* 1977, p102; Jim Steinmeyer, *Charles Fort, The Man Who Invented The Supernatural*, Heinemann, 2008, p246.

4 'The Teleport: The Most Remarkable Invention Of The Age', *Times of India*, 6 Mar 1878. Thanks to Kay Massingill.

5 'The Teleport', *Riverine Grazier*, Hay, NSW, 8 June 1878; 'The Latest Wonder', *Capricornian*, Rockhampton, Qld., 29 June 1878; 'The Teleport', *Colonist*, New Zealand, 1 Aug 1878; 'The Teleport', *Hawaiian Gazette*, Honolulu, Hawaii, 23 Oct, 1878.

6 The Man Without A body', *Sun*, NYC, New York, 25 Mar 1877.

7 Sam Moskowitz, *The Crystal Man: Stories by Edward Page Mitchell*, Doubleday, 1973, page iv.

8 The teleportation technology involves argon and pyramidal structures, but is not further explained by Jane. In Everett F Bleiler, *Science-Fiction: The Early Years*, Kent State University Press, 1990, p391.

9 Robert Duncan Milne, 'Prof. Vehr's Electrical Experiment', *The Argonaut*, San Francisco, California, 24 Jan 1885, pp4-5.

10 'The Teleporon', *Longman's Magazine,* vol. 7 No. 5, Mar 1886, pp518-549. Stacpoole explains it away, to the chagrin of contemporary reviewers: "Teleporon, a medium for transporting the body to any distance… is only chloroform…" In 'The Magazines for March', *Pall Mall Gazette*, 3 Mar 1886, p11. "Mr. Stacpoole's 'Teleporon' would have been better if he had given the reins to his fancy, and not pulled up to offer an explanation as improbable as the mystery itself." In *St. James's Gazette*, 4 Mar 1886, p 7.

11 Sydney Whiting, *Helionde, Or, Adventures in The Sun*, Chapman and Hall, 1855, p20.

Conspiracy Central: The Life and Lies of Fred Lee Crisman

The coming of the flying saucers, tales of the Hollow Earth, the assassination of JFK and the Watergate scandal: one man connects them all. **BRIAN J ROBB** explores the bizarre world of wannabe spy and 'conspiracy nexus point' Fred Lee Crisman.

There has long been a search for a 'theory of everything' in physics – the idea that all the 'fundamental forces' of the Universe can be linked in one ultimate theory that might explain everything. In the paranormal and supernatural world there is a similar search for a 'theory of everything', an idea or a concept that might link together all the fortean 'high strangeness' of the Universe.

In the perhaps more down-to-Earth world of conspiracy, however, this 'theory of everything' could be embodied in one man: the mysterious and slippery figure of Fred Lee Crisman. Born in 1919 (or 1920 in some accounts), Crisman is a figure that connects various worlds of 20th century conspiracy, from the birth of the UFO phenomenon to the paranoid worlds of secret intelligence and political assassinations.

In the mid-1940s, Crisman was a correspondent for *Amazing Stories* magazine, claiming to have battled strange underground creatures. He was later involved in the 1947 Maury Island UFO incident (see **FT41:52-57, 307:30-36**), and it has been suggested that the late-1960s alien invasion television series *The Invaders* was based upon his exploits.

Notoriously, in 1968 Crisman was one of many subpoenaed by Jim Garrison in his effort to find those behind the 1963 assassination of President John F Kennedy (see **FT176:32-36**). Crisman was claimed to be one of the mysterious trio of 'tramps' present at the assassination and to be working on behalf of a secret American government agency. In 1979, the House Select Committee on Assassinations declared Crisman the only one of several suspects to actually resemble photos of the three 'tramps'. Little wonder, then, that students of deep conspiracy regard Fred Lee Crisman as a nexus point for cover-ups ranging from the 1940s to his death in 1975.

LEFT: Fred Lee Crisman.

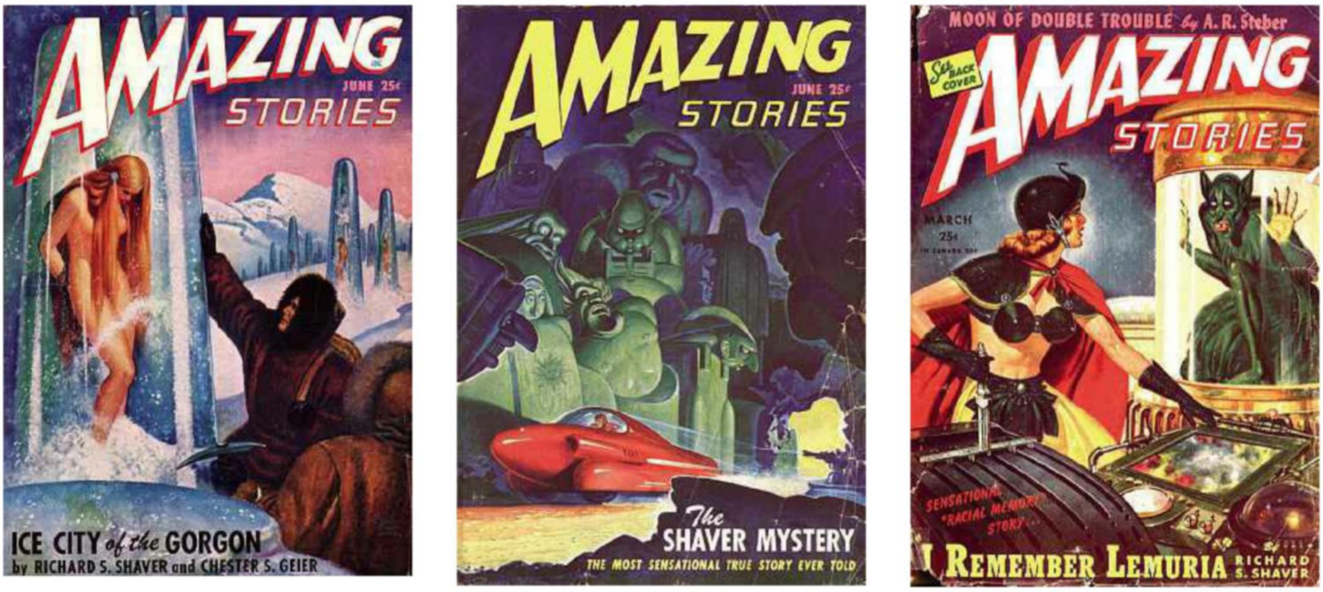
Students of deep conspiracy regard Fred Lee Crisman as a nexus point for cover-ups

MAIN ILLUSTRATION: ALEX TOMLINSON

AMAZING STORIES!

It is fitting that Crisman's story should have its origins in fantasy. In April 1926, Hugo Gernsback launched *Amazing Stories*, the first regular periodical devoted exclusively to science fiction. Although it was published for over 80 years, *Amazing* had a turbulent beginning and Gernsback went bust and lost the magazine. It passed through several publishers in the Depression years, and by 1938 was published by Ziff-Davis and edited by Raymond A Palmer (see pp40-45).

Palmer was an odd character in his own right. Born in 1910, he was hit by a milk truck at the age of seven, leaving him with a broken back and a spinal infection. In an autobiographical sketch in a 1934 issue of *Fantasy*, Palmer recalled: "At the age



ABOVE: Richard Shaver's tales of a long-lost underground civilisation and the evil deros filled issue after issue of Ray Palmer's *Amazing Stories* magazine.

of seven… I jousted with a truck in the middle of the street. The truck won; and landing on my head, folded me up to a permanent height of 4ft 8in [142cm]. I'm still folded."

Unsuccessful operations stunted his growth (he ultimately grew no taller) and left him with a hunchback. He became an autodidact, reading widely. Like many ostracised youngsters, Palmer lost himself in the world of science fiction, getting involved with the early fandom and creating fanzines (his *The Comet* was among the very first). Long before he edited the magazine, Palmer was an avid reader of *Amazing*. Palmer's decade on the magazine, covering most of the 1940s, was probably the highlight of his career. Then came the 'flying saucers' and Fred Lee Crisman.

THE SAUCER AGE

The modern era of the flying saucer started 70 years ago on 24 June 1947. Pilot Kenneth Arnold reported sighting nine unidentified flying objects in the skies above Mount Rainier in Washington that were "flat like a pie pan" (see **FT100:26-27, 137:34-39**). The additional description of these craft flying like "a saucer skipping across water" gave the press the buzz term needed to launch a phenomenon. Arnold's 'flying saucer' sighting gave rise to a wave of such encounters reaching from 1947 into the 21st century.

This was catnip to an editor of popular pulps like Raymond Palmer. He'd long been fascinated by tales of spaceships, from biblical visions to Philip Francis Nowlan's Buck Rogers stories (which first appeared in *Amazing* in 1928) and Orson Welles's infamous 1938 'War of the Worlds' broadcast (see **FT199:42-47**), which spooked New Yorkers just as Palmer took up his editorship.

Palmer even had his own close encounter in 1939, writing about it in *Amazing*: "Your editors were reminded of Charles Fort and his *LO!* The other day, seen from our 22nd story window, in the west was a strong light, high in the air, which remained for perhaps 10 minutes, then faded… your editor got a great kick out of announcing the arrival of the Martians to his fellow editors." When Fred Lee Crisman contacted him about something that happened near Maury Island, Palmer was ready to believe.

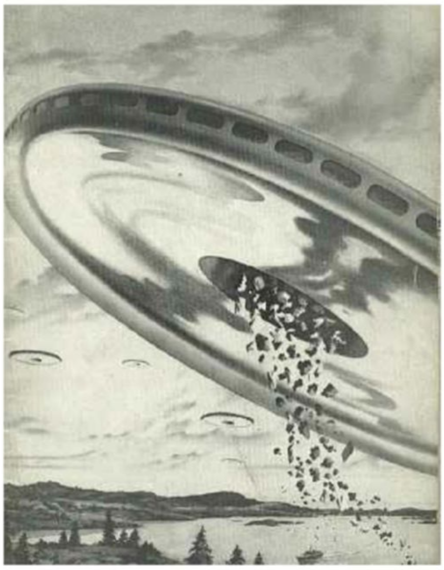
The editor had form. In 1943, Richard Shaver had contacted Palmer with a claim that he had uncovered a long lost underground civilisation. Beings he dubbed the 'dero' (evil) and the 'tero' (good) controlled the affairs of the planet through thought waves. The 'Shaver mystery' grew in the telling, mainly in a series of long essays, over many years. Shaver's ramblings, filtered through Palmer's razor-sharp editor's mind and rewritten, emerged as 'I Remember Lemuria!' (see **FT127:36-41**, **350:52-53** and pp40-45 this issue), an account of an underground world of spaceships and death rays – and, what's more, it was all true!

Palmer was perhaps gullible, but he was certainly manipulative and he knew a bestseller when he saw one. The Shaver Mystery added hugely to the already massive circulation of *Amazing Stories*, and the tales of Lemuria ran throughout much of the mid-1940s. Much of what was later considered to be the basis of the flying saucer mythology and its accompanying conspiracy-based literature began right here.

ABOVE: Kenneth Arnold's June 1947 encounter marked the dawn of the modern flying saucer era.

MARY EVANS PICTURE LIBRARY / ALAMY STOCK PHOTO

JOE MABEL / CREATIVE COMMONS



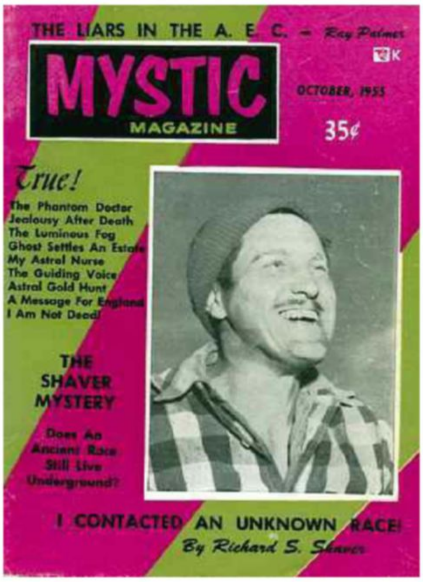
ABOVE LEFT: Maury Island. **ABOVE RIGHT:** The saucer that Harold Dahl claimed rained metallic debris on him and his son, as illustrated in a 1948 issue of *The Shaver Mystery Magazine*. **BELOW:** Shaver appears on the cover of a 1955 issue of *Mystic* magazine, a Ray Palmer title dealing with 'true' mysteries.

It was little wonder then that Fred Lee Crisman saw in Palmer someone he could use to further his own interests. Like the UFO phenomenon itself, Crisman had been born in Washington, in the city of Tacoma – almost 60 miles northwest of Mount Rainier, where Arnold's saucer sighting took place. Crisman first surfaced in a letter to *Amazing* in June 1946 describing his own experience of the 'deros'. He had served in the US Army during World War II and while hiding in a cave in Burma was the victim of a dero attack in which the creatures wielded a fantastic laser weapon.

Crisman wrote of his experience: "My companion and I fought our way out of a cave with sub-machine guns. I have two nine-inch scars on my left arm that came from wounds given me in the cave when I was 50ft [15m] from a moving object of any kind…" His main concern was Palmer's publication of classified intelligence information. Crisman's letter continued: "You can imagine my fright when I picked up my first copy of *Amazing* and see you splashing words about on the subject. For Heaven's sake, drop the whole thing!" There was further correspondence from Crisman, including a letter in May 1947, just before the Arnold sightings.

When Kenneth Arnold first reported his 'flying saucer' visions that June, Raymond Palmer was one of the first to take the pilot's report seriously. Palmer planned an 'all-saucer' edition of *Amazing*, only for his publisher to kill the idea; Palmer said his plan was dropped "the day after a man with a gold badge paid a visit". Partnering with Curtis Fuller, another Ziff-Davies editor, Palmer (under the pen name 'Robert N Webster') launched *Fate* magazine (see **FT237:44-49**) in 1948 as a repository for his saucer lore, including Crisman's stories of what became known as the 'Maury Island hoax'.

Dahl reported a loud bang and a wave of silver metallic debris raining down



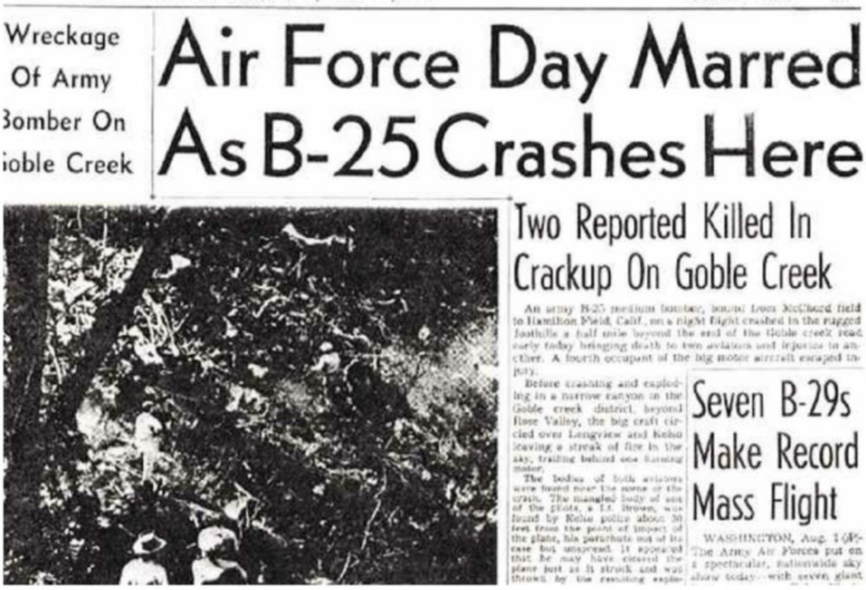
UFOLOGY GROUND ZERO

What happened next – much of it drawn from Palmer's own accounts – puts Fred Lee Crisman at ground zero of the UFO-conspiracy, right at the centre of the nexus of flying saucers and 'parapolitics'. If Palmer thought the Shaver Mystery had been bizarre, he was about to discover a whole new level of weird.

The Maury Island incident has been widely denounced as a hoax, but in the beginning Palmer was firmly convinced he was involved in something extraordinary. On 21 June 1947, just days before Arnold's 'flying saucer' encounter and mere weeks before the Roswell 'UFO crash' of July, something strange happened at Puget Sound, near Maury Island. The information about this weird event came to Palmer from Crisman in the wake of Arnold's story hitting the news, so Arnold's sighting may have inspired the tale Crisman told of a supposed earlier event.

Crisman claimed to be a logger who was involved in salvage operations in Tacoma. His colleague Harold Dahl (either a harbour patrolman or a junk dealer) witnessed six donut-shaped silver craft in the skies above Maury Island. Each around 100ft (30m) in diameter, five of the 'saucers' had circled the sixth, which appeared to be suffering a malfunction. Dahl reported to Crisman a loud bang and a wave of silver metallic debris that rained down upon Dahl, his teenage son Charles (who suffered burns), and his dog (who, in an especially poignant touch, was killed). The flying discs, including the impaired sixth, then flew off.

Palmer contacted Arnold and sent him to Tacoma to investigate Crisman's claims. Dahl first related the tale to Arnold, but ended by warning the pilot off, telling him not to investigate further. The next day, Arnold met Crisman, who confirmed Dahl's story, claiming to have retrieved the saucer debris and to have witnessed one of the silver craft himself the following day. Arnold was uneasy. He later wrote in his book *The Coming of the Saucers* (co-written with Palmer) that he and fellow pilot Captain Smith "both had a peculiar feeling that we were being watched or that there was something dangerous about getting involved with Crisman and Dahl".



Wreckage
Of Army
Bomber On
Goble Creek

Air Force Day Marred As B-25 Crashes Here

Two Reported Killed In Crackup On Goble Creek

Seven B-29s Make Record Mass Flight

ABOVE LEFT: Project Blue Book's Edward J Ruppelt. **ABOVE RIGHT:** A 1947 newspaper reports the crash of the aircraft carrying the Maury Island 'debris'.

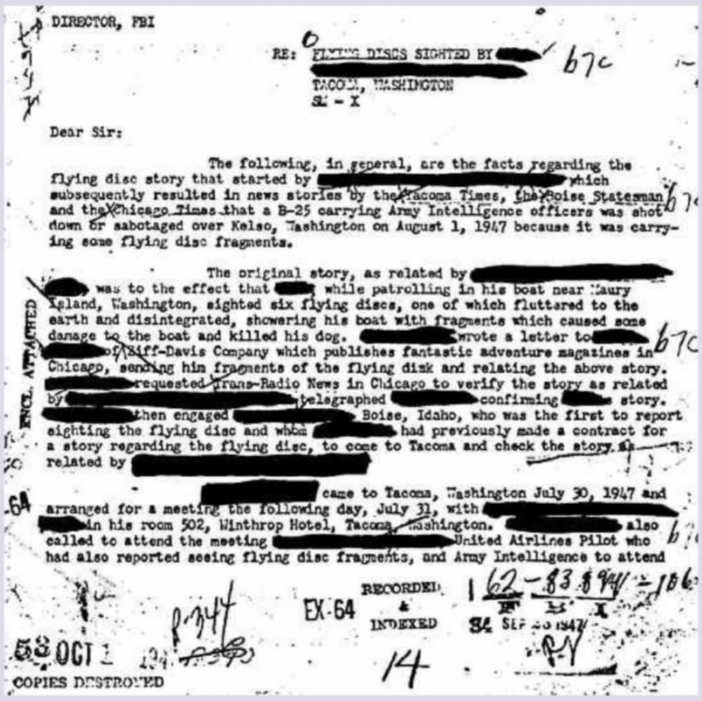
Much that would become common in conspiracy tales and UFO lore stemmed from this moment. Crisman's complex and involved tale included such incidents as a bugged hotel room, warnings to drop the investigation, the involvement of mysterious 'men in black', the recovery of saucer crash debris, the death of an over-inquisitive newspaper reporter, and ultimately accusations of an elaborate hoax (itself potential misdirection to cover something even more astonishing). The Maury Island incident had it all – and Fred Lee Crisman was right at the centre of it.

On 31 July 1947 two Air Force men – Captain Davidson and Lieutenant Brown – took away some of Crisman's 'saucer debris', heading for Wright-Patterson Air Force Base. They never arrived, as their airplane crashed near Kelso, Washington, after an engine fire. Both flyers were killed and Crisman's 'debris' was never recovered. Crisman later claimed the wreckage showed signs of having been subjected to the same dero 'energy weapon' he'd encountered in Burma. The remaining evidence, including mysterious 'white metal' resembling lava, was dumped by Arnold as he fled the scene. Crisman and Dahl similarly vanished, with Crisman spotted boarding an Air Corps plane bound for Alaska. The only man left standing, and so carrying responsibility for the 'hoax', was Raymond Palmer.

In his 1956 Project Blue Book 'Report on Unidentified Flying Objects', Edward J Ruppelt concluded: "[Crisman and Dahl] admitted that the rock fragments had nothing to do with flying saucers. They had sent in the rock fragments [to Palmer] as a joke… and said the rock came from a flying saucer because that's what [Raymond Palmer] wanted him to say." For his part, Palmer felt Crisman was the true orchestrator of the Maury Island incident, but Palmer had been left holding the bag.

THE FILE ON FRED LEE CRISMAN

An FBI file on Crisman was opened in August 1947 (just after Maury Island and the Arnold affair) when he applied for a job at the Boeing plant in Seattle, a facility protected under the Atomic Energy Act of 1946. The FBI file falls under the classification Security Matter-X (SM-X), essentially a version of *The X-Files* cataloguing anomalous incidents and strange events. The FBI paperwork concluded that the Maury Island incident involving Crisman was a 'hoax', although the documents carefully point out that in Crisman's own words he "did not admit that his story was a hoax but only stated that if questioned by the authorities he was going to *say* it was a hoax". However, the FBI documents go on to say that both Crisman and Dahl, when interviewed by the FBI, stated there had been no "flying discs". The document called the supposed fragments "strange rock formations" and that a letter to Ray Palmer "represented this material as being part of a flying disc, and both Dahl and Crisman admitted that this statement was entirely false". The FBI concluded that the material retrieved by Dahl and Crisman was little more than slag from a nearby smelter. Following the air crash and the death of the two investigators, a memo on the subject, also categorized 'SM-X', was sent to FBI head J Edgar Hoover.



DIRECTOR, FBI

RE: FLYING DISCS SIGHTED BY [redacted] b7c
[redacted]
TACOMA, WASHINGTON
SM - X

Dear Sir:

The following, in general, are the facts regarding the flying disc story that started by [redacted] which subsequently resulted in news stories by the Tacoma Times, the Boise Statesman and the Chicago Times that a B-25 carrying Army Intelligence officers was shot down or sabotaged over Kelso, Washington on August 1, 1947 because it was carrying some flying disc fragments. b7c

The original story, as related by [redacted] was to the effect that [redacted] while patrolling in his boat near Maury Island, Washington, sighted six flying discs, one of which fluttered to the earth and disintegrated, showering his boat with fragments which caused some damage to the boat and killed his dog. [redacted] wrote a letter to [redacted] of Ziff-Davis Company which publishes fantastic adventure magazines in Chicago, sending him fragments of the flying disk and relating the above story. [redacted] requested Trans-Radio News in Chicago to verify the story as related by [redacted] telegraphed [redacted] confirming [redacted] story. [redacted] then engaged [redacted] Boise, Idaho, who was the first to report sighting the flying disc and whom [redacted] had previously made a contract for a story regarding the flying disc, to come to Tacoma and check the story as related by [redacted] b7c

ENCL. ATTACHED

[redacted] came to Tacoma, Washington July 30, 1947 and arranged for a meeting the following day, July 31, with [redacted] in his room 502, Winthrop Hotel, Tacoma, Washington. [redacted] also called to attend the meeting [redacted] United Airlines Pilot who had also reported seeing flying disc fragments, and Army Intelligence to attend b7c

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However, these events provided fuel for Palmer's *Fate* magazine, as well as his other publications such as *Flying Saucers from Other Worlds* and *Mystic*. Flying saucers and the newly created 'UFO mystery' became central to Palmer's publications, both responding to and fuelling the public obsession. Although seemingly manipulated by Crisman, Palmer saw himself as an evangelist of the new saucer movement, the only one brave enough to discuss the subject openly. In an editorial in a May 1957 issue of *Flying Saucers from Other Worlds*, Palmer boasted: "When flying saucers first appeared, no writer had the gumption to sit down and state it was a plain news item. No, they had to make a huge joke out of it… Your editor has a word for that kind of writer, and its spelled 'tramp'."

THE CONSPIRACY AGE

What of the mysterious Fred Lee Crisman? After orchestrating Maury Island, he next turned up as a 'tramp', but not in the way Palmer meant. Author Timothy Good, in his book *Need To Know*, claimed Crisman was one of the trio of tramps arrested near the 'grassy knoll' on the day of the assassination of President John F Kennedy and may even have been one of the gunmen. Was the man who was central to the birth of the UFO legend now involved in another pillar of the conspiracy world? Was he, in fact, a 'black ops' specialist manipulating events from behind the scenes? Or was he, as his then-employer claimed, busy working that November 1963 day as a teacher in Rainier High School in Washington?

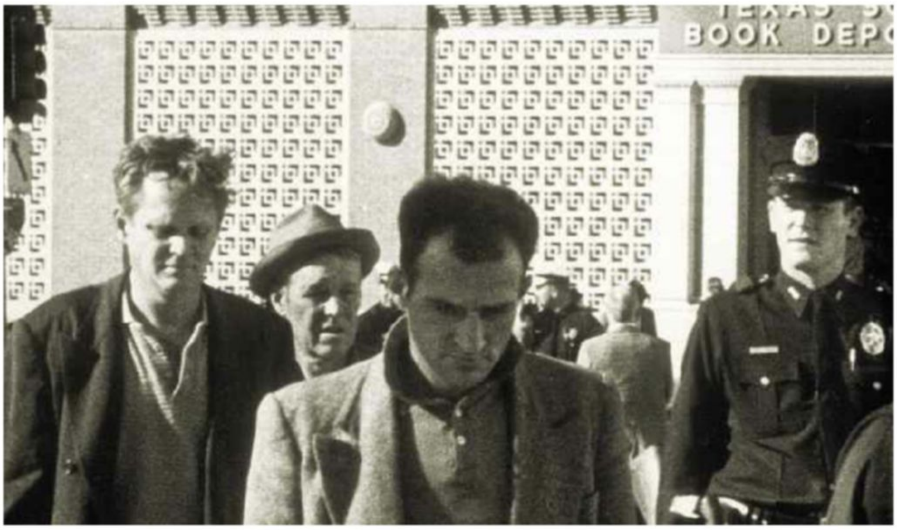
The eventually uncovered arrest records and photos of the three men reveal the 'tramps' to be Harold Doyle (oddly close to 'Harold Dahl'), John Gedney, and Gus Abrams – not a Crisman (or even a Harrleson or an E Howard Hunt) among them… However, the so-called 'Torbitt Document' of the early 1970s also suggested Crisman (or 'Crismon') was one of the trigger-happy trio. The document claimed "a photographer snapped a picture a few minutes after the assassination of Crismon [sic] … and two of his charges in the process of being arrested… at Dealey Plaza."

Crisman's involvement in the JFK assassination, whatever it may have been (one source even suggested he was also behind the shooting of police officer JD Tippit), was enough to earn him a subpoena from investigator Jim Garrison as part of his failed case against Clay Shaw. Garrison, the District Attorney of Louisiana, made the JFK assassination a special subject of study, focusing on the nexus of conspiracy that centred on New Orleans and Dallas in the early 1960s. Garrison's case made the now infamous Zapruder film public for the first time.

When asked directly, Crisman denied under oath ever having worked for the CIA. He also stated: "I have never believed that Oswald was a loner in the assassination of the President and I felt Mr Garrison had something going, but I did not know what." The only occupations Crisman admitted to were political copywriting and speechwriting and hosting a nightly right wing radio talk show in Tacoma using the pseudonym 'Jon Gold'.

The main interest Garrison had in Crisman concerned his peripheral connections to key Dallas underworld figures, including 'Mark Evans' (also known as Tom Beckham), to whom Crisman was introduced by Harold Dahl (it's that mystery man again). Beckham was said to be a 'banker' for various Cuban-connected organisations, reputed to have handled funds connected to the assassination plot. Although claiming not to be deeply involved with Evans/Beckham, Crisman did confirm that he had named him, without his knowledge or authorisation, in papers setting up "three or four" incorporated organisations.

Although Crisman's military service



ABOVE: The 'three tramps' arrested near the Grassy Knoll; the one at the rear certainly looks like Fred Lee Crisman, although his involvement in the JFK assassination appears to be less straightforward.

A WIDER CONSPIRACY

Crisman associate Michael Riconosciuto had been a gifted child with special skills in electronics and communications technology, and Crisman knew him when working for his father's advertising agency in the mid-1960s. It has been suggested that in the 1970s, when Crisman was involved in the local politics of Tacoma, the then teenage Riconosciuto helped sweep for (and plant) bugging devices to help further Crisman's political aims. Riconosciuto went on to work in various capacities, mainly as an engineer in California, ultimately leading him to serve as an anti-government witness in the Inslaw case in 1991. He claimed he had been involved in reprogramming Inslaw's 'Promis' software with a 'back door' to allow for the clandestine tracking of individuals and had subsequently been threatened by Justice Department officials.

As an 'inconvenient' witness, Riconosciuto was eliminated from the Inslaw case in the most extreme way: he was arrested (and later convicted) on suspicion of conspiracy to manufacture and distribute methamphetamine. He claimed this was a clear frame-up on behalf of government forces and that his 'home lab' was for the extraction of precious metals, not the manufacture of meth.

Riconosciuto, then 43, was jailed; but this did not remove him entirely from the conspiracy field. In February 2001, he alleged, through his lawyers, that terrorists within the US had plans to hijack aircraft to target American sites. In return for information on this plot he requested immunity to prosecution and his freedom. His request was denied and the information apparently ignored. When Riconosciuto attempted to contact the press, he was moved from Allenwood Federal Prison to a stricter facility in Springfield, Missouri, where he was cut off from the outside world. Within seven months, the entire world would be aware of the events of 9/11.

THE INVADERS
A Quinn Martin PRODUCTION

KEEP WATCHING THE SKIES!

As if to cap off his long career in the conspiracy world, Fred Lee Crisman believed he was the inspiration behind the late-1960s television series *The Invaders*. The Quinn Martin production featured Roy Thinnes as architect David Vincent who, after a personal 'close encounter', spent two seasons pursuing flying saucers and the alien presence on Earth. Harold Dahl, Crisman's partner in the Maury Island event, agreed in correspondence with UFO researcher Gary Leslie that the Thinnes character bore a marked resemblance to his former partner.

Producer Quinn Martin had his own conspiracy connections. For his earlier series *The FBI*, which began in 1965, Martin hired FBI agent Mark Felt (pictured below) as a technical advisor. In the early-1970s, Felt would use the codename 'Deep Throat' in his interactions with *Washington Post* reporters Bob Woodward and Carl Bernstein concerning President Nixon's involvement in the Watergate scandal, leading ultimately to Nixon's resignation. Given this connection, it is perhaps not beyond the bounds of possibility that Martin developed *The Invaders* after hearing tales of Crisman's misadventures from his FBI contacts. Ultimately, that series and the entire UFO-conspiracy nexus would lead to the 1990s hit *The X-Files.*

HOWARD MOORE / DESERET MORNING NEWS / GETTY IMAGES

ABOVE: Crisman claimed to be the inspiration behind *The Invaders*, starring Roy Thinnes.

and flying experience did come up, there was nothing about the Maury Island incident. In a curious footnote – or yet another tendril of conspiracy – author Kenn Thomas (in *JFK & UFO: Military-Industrial Conspiracy and Cover-Up from Maury Island to Dallas*) claimed that Garrison was serving as an FBI field agent in Washington at the time of the Maury Island affair. Also based in Washington at that time were Clay Shaw and Guy Banister, another FBI man who was then the Special Agent in Charge in the Pacific Northwest. In the 1960s, Banister was a private investigator that Garrison alleged was a key player in the New Orleans JFK murder plot. In his book *Alien Agenda*, Jim Marrs claimed the first person Clay Shaw phoned when he was arrested to testify in the Garrison case was – you guessed it – Fred Crisman. Shaw also popped up in the so-called 'MJ-12' documents as the recipient of more of the Maury Island crash debris from Crisman.

After his JFK Grand Jury testimony, Crisman continued to be active in local politics in Tacoma during the 1970s. He related his local government battles in a book, *The Murder of a City*, described by one reviewer as a "weird, politically slanted rant" with a "paranoid tone". In his book, Crisman went out of his way to deny any knowledge of a conspiracy to assassinate JFK.

There are other weird conspiracy connections to Crisman. In the Garrison JFK Grand Jury testimony he spoke of working for the 'Riconosciuto Advertising Agency'. He described the business as an "advertising agency that handles quite a few political candidates... I write assignments for people, political speeches… It's owned by Marshall Riconosciuto".

The name Riconosciuto is significant in conspiracy circles. Marshall Riconosciuto (who died in 1993, aged 68) had connections to Richard Nixon, and was said to have been an admirer of Hitler. His son, Michael Riconosciuto, whom

OFF / AFP / GETTY IMAGES

ABOVE: William Picketing, James Van Allen, and German scientist Wernher von Braun (from left to right) brandish a model of the first American satellite "Explorer 1" on 31 January 1958.

Crisman had known for years, is widely regarded as having been a 'deep state operative' responsible for destabilisation and infiltration of politically important groups. He has been connected with the 'October surprise' of 1980 involving the Iran hostage crisis; the Iran-Contra affair of the mid-1980s; the Wackenhut CIA 'skunkworks' facility; bio-warfare agents developed on the Cabazon Native American lands; and, most importantly, was a key player in the Inslaw affair of the early 1990s, involving allegations that the government had stolen surveillance software for covert use in sensitive foreign countries. The entire complex affair was described as a 'high tech Watergate'.

OPERATION PAPERCLIP

Was Crisman's involvement in such disparate events merely coincidence, or was there more to connect them? In 2013 the CIA released a 'secret memo' written by John F Kennedy just 10 days before his death. The memo, dated 12 November 1963, asked for information concerning UFO activity in the United States and Soviet Union. Depending on your point of view, this memo either provides a motive for silencing Kennedy or is simply another tool used to provide cover for some more nefarious activities under the generally dismissed banner of 'flying saucers'.

Was Fred Lee Crisman the connective tissue between the UFO phenomenon that began in the late-1940s and the assassination of President Kennedy at the start of the 1960s? Was he an agent for counter-intelligence, operating off the books on behalf of sinister forces? Or was he just a conman and self-publicist who perhaps got caught up in his own fantasy world?

One theory has Crisman acting as a 'disruption agent', a trickster figure whose role was to throw curious people off the scent, essentially establishing the 1940s UFO myth as a cover for something even more sinister. Was the whole thing a hoax on behalf of the intelligence agencies to hide their own activities, rather than evidence of extraterrestrial life? Some speculated the Maury Island incident was created to hide top-secret radar-disrupting equipment being field-tested, or even to conceal the illegal dumping of nuclear waste from a local plutonium reactor.

Or could the Maury Island incident, if it happened at all, the Arnold sighting and the various 'UFO crashes' of 1947, including Roswell, be evidence of test flights for back-engineered craft developed from Nazi technology? It's an explanation that doesn't require aliens. Operation Paperclip brought key scientists, engineers, and technicians from Germany to America after the Second World War, including Wernher von Braun, harnessing their Nazi know-how in fulfilling Kennedy's pledge to 'put a man on the Moon' before the 1960s were over (see **FT163:50-51, 168:32-37**).

Any war crimes, perhaps involving the use of captive slave labour at Peenemünde, were quickly forgiven and the transplanted scientists put to work in giving the US an industrial aerospace advantage. Rumours circulated of Nazi plans for 'saucer-like' flying vehicles; perhaps the 'flying saucer' waves of 1947 were the visible evidence of these prototype craft in action. Was it Crisman's job to explain away these sightings and to tar any eyewitnesses with the badge of being crazy believers in aliens? Jim Garrison, writing in a 1977 memo, said of Crisman: "The only reasonable conclusion is that he was an operative at a deep cover level in a long-range, clandestine, intelligence mission directly related to maintaining national security."

Writer Ron Halbritter has made an extensive study of Crisman's life and activities, and through use of the Freedom of Information Act, studied Crisman's FBI file and military records. He falls on the side of Crisman as a wannabe – a conman caught up in a world he couldn't quite comprehend. "Fred Lee Crisman would have you, me, and the rest of the world believe he was a secret agent," noted Halbritter, dismissing Crisman as a significant 'player' of any sort. "Crisman always sought to be the centre of attention. When Ray Palmer described the Shaver Mystery, he claimed to have been in a dero cave. When Harold Dahl saw a UFO at Maury Island, the next day Crisman claimed, 'Me, too'. While Jim Garrison was seeking Kennedy assassins, he suddenly got an anonymous letter implying Crisman was involved. When Roy Thinnes had a hit television show in 1967 called *The Invaders*, a letter, allegedly from Harold Dahl, was sent saying that the character David Vincent was based on Crisman's life. These are examples of Crisman's need for fame."

Fred Lee Crisman died in December 1975 of kidney failure, aged only 56. Whether a deep state operative in the murky world of parapolitics, an enabler of the post-war UFO mythology, or a gunman on the grassy knoll, he certainly left his mark, still confusing researchers into UFOs and assassination studies alike. Maybe he had the last laugh, after all…

FURTHER READING

Raymond A Palmer's life story:
http://efanzines.com/EK/eI41/index.htm#man

John A Keel: Fortean Times, 1983, 'The Man Who Invented Flying Saucers'
http://greyfalcon.us/The%20Man%20Who%20Invented%20Flying%20Saucers.htm

Ron Halbritter, Before Roswell:
http://n6rpf.net/mauryisl.html

Crisman's JFK/Garrison Grand Jury testimony:
https://archive.org/stream/OrleansParishGrandJuryTestimonyOfF.LeeCrisman21Nov1968/Orleans%20Parish%20Grand%20Jury%20Testimony%20of%20F.%20Lee%20Crisman,%2021%20Nov%201968_djvu.txt

Crisman's FBI file:
https://www.muckrock.com/foi/united-states-of-america-10/fred-crisman-24634/#file-110354, obtained through FOI by Michael Best.

Kenn Thomas, *JFK & UFO: Military-Industrial Conspiracy and Cover-Up from Maury Island to Dallas* (2011, Steamshovel Press)

Fred Nadis, *The Man From Mars: Ray Palmer's Amazing Pulp Journey* (2013, Tarcher)

BRIAN J ROBB is a regular contributor to FT and the author of books on silent film, superheroes, Steampunk, Philip K Dick, Wes Craven, and Walt Disney. He is co-editor of the Sci-Fi Bulletin website and lives in Edinburgh.

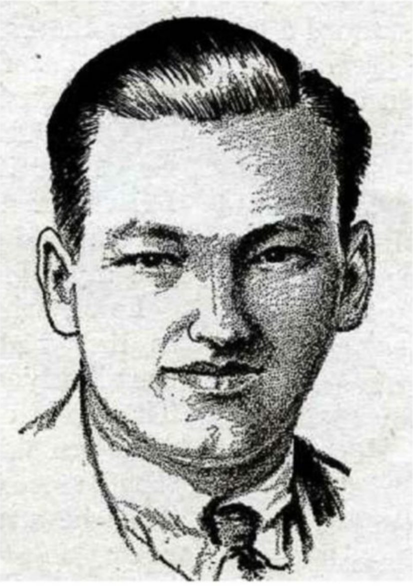
Astounding Science, Amazing Theories!

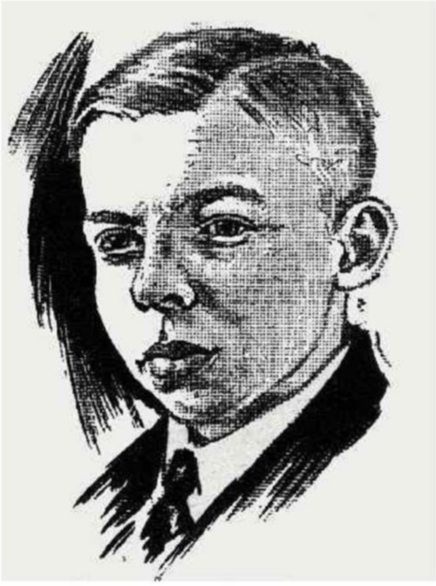
Ray Palmer and John W Campbell had very different approaches to publishing science fiction, but both were drawn to forteana and fringe science, from flying saucers and the Shaver Mystery to Dianetics and the Dean Drive. **ANDREW MAY** compares and contrasts...

When the pulp magazine *Amazing Stories* made its debut in April 1926, it was the first periodical devoted entirely to science fiction. It was soon joined by a number of copycat titles from rival publishers, including *Astounding Stories of Super Science* in January 1930. Initially quite similar, the two magazines diverged dramatically in style during the course of the 1930s. *Amazing* headed downmarket, printing juvenile space opera and paying its authors rock-bottom rates. *Astounding* slowly made its way upmarket, particularly after it was acquired by the prestigious (by pulp standards) Street & Smith company in 1933. By the end of the decade, both magazines had new editors and a distinctive direction of their own.

In 1937, John W Campbell Jr took the editorial helm at *Astounding Stories* – which he renamed *Astounding Science Fiction*, with increasing typographical emphasis on the "Science Fiction" part of the masthead rather than that embarrassing word "Astounding". The following year, Raymond A Palmer took over the editorship of *Amazing*. In many ways, Palmer was Campbell's polar opposite.

Both editors were born in 1910, and both discovered science fiction as teenagers. But Palmer was 100 per cent pure fanboy – he had created the world's first fanzine in 1930 – while Campbell was a professionally trained scientist, earning a degree in physics from Duke University in 1931 (when, by coincidence, JB Rhine was conducting his first parapsychology experiments at the same institution). As science fiction editors, the two men represented opposite ends of the spectrum. Palmer specialised in the kind of unchallenging adventure stories that people automatically associate with the term "pulp science fiction". As genre historian Ron Goulart put it: "What Palmer brought forth was a thick flamboyant pulp (it eventually swelled to over 250 pages) aimed at adolescent boys, and, possibly, superstitious old ladies."[1] Campbell, on the other hand, focused on the cutting edge of speculative fiction, publishing early works by Isaac Asimov, Robert A Heinlein and other "serious" science fiction authors.





ABOVE: John W Campbell (left) and Raymond Palmer (right), editors extraordinaire.

Both editors were born in 1910, and both discovered science fiction as teenagers...

FORTEAN NON-FICTION?

Despite their obvious differences, Palmer and Campbell showed some remarkable similarities when it came to the *non*-fiction they chose to publish. At first sight, the very idea of a fiction magazine running non-fiction articles might seem a contradiction in terms. To quote Arthur C Clarke (another author whose early work was published in Campbell's *Astounding*): "Whether *Ranch Romances*, *Western Love Stories* et al. ever printed thoughtful essays on land ownership, cattle branding… and similar relevant subjects, I have no idea; but somehow I doubt it."[2] But science fiction magazines were destined to be different. Soon after *Astounding* was acquired by Street & Smith, it started to print regular non-fiction articles. Interestingly enough, it

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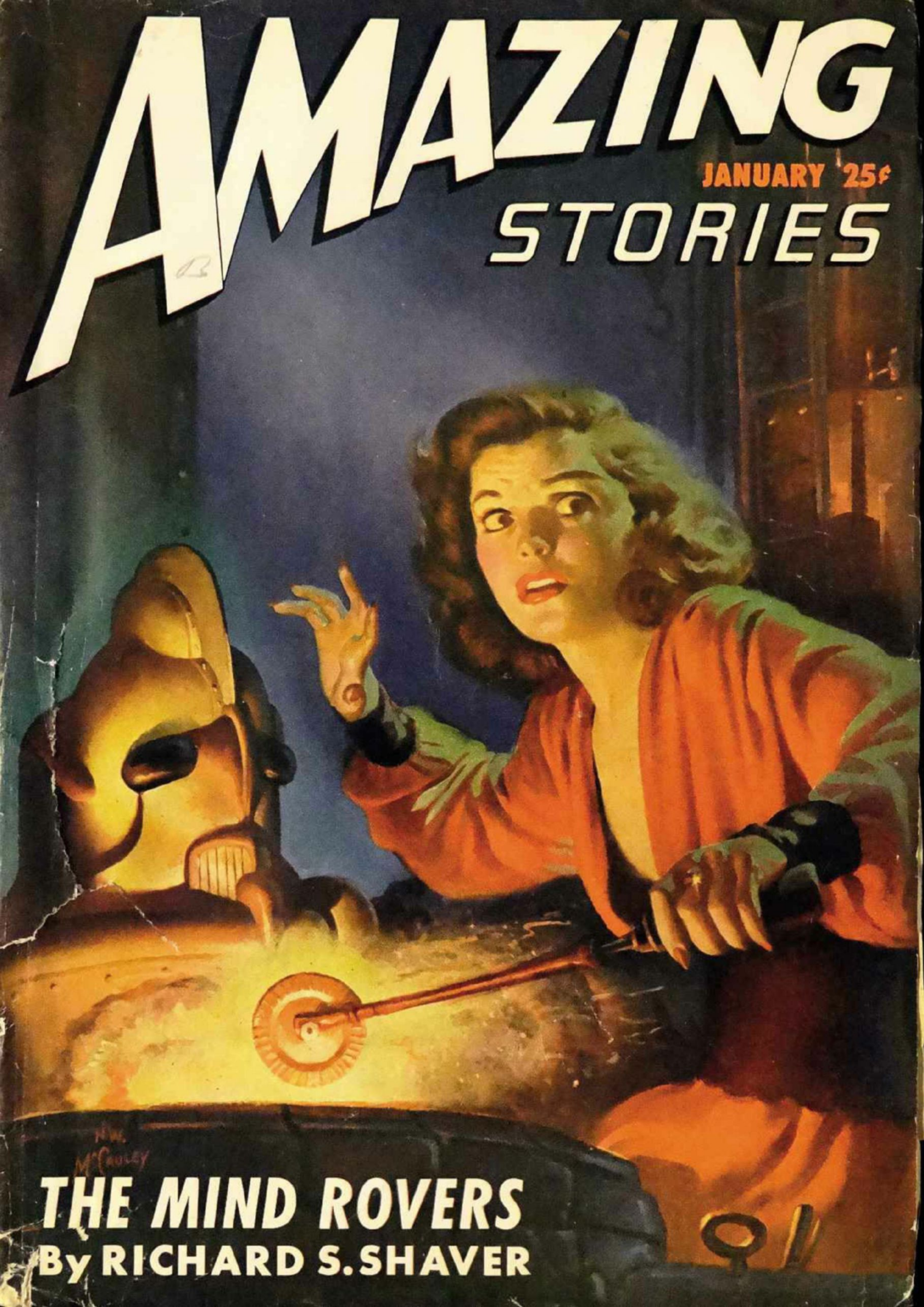
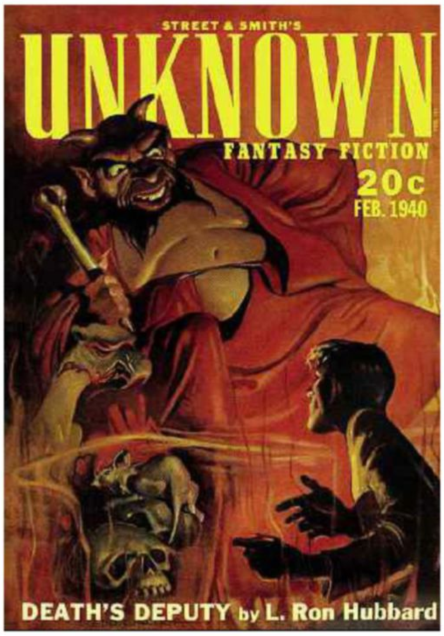
STORIES


H.W. McCAULEY

THE MIND ROVERS

By RICHARD S. SHAVER

COURTESY FATE MAGAZINE

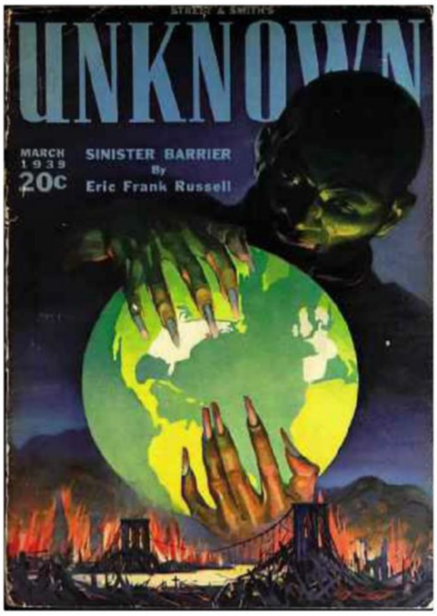


ABOVE LEFT: Richard Shaver and Ray Palmer. **ABOVE RIGHT:** Shaver was a prolific contributor to Palmer's magazines, while L Ron Hubbard – future founder of Scientology – was writing for Campbell's titles. **BELOW:** Eric Frank Russell's 'Sinister Barrier' appeared in the first issue of Campbell's *Unknown*, March 1939.

all started with Charles Fort: a serialisation of *Lo!* ran over eight issues in 1934. *Lo!* had appeared in book form three years earlier, but in *Astounding* it reached an estimated monthly audience of 50,000.[3]

The writings of Charles Fort provided the inspiration for Eric Frank Russell's novel *Sinister Barrier* (see **FT312:49**). Russell originally submitted the story to *Astounding*, but Campbell chose instead to run it as the lead story in the first issue of *Unknown* (Mar 1939), another magazine he edited for Street & Smith. In a note at the start of *Sinister Barrier*, Russell explicitly acknowledges his debt to Fort, and to his chilling "I think we're property" quote in particular. Russell goes on to claim that the story is essentially true, but presented in the guise of fiction in order to avoid the risk of "removal" by the powers that be ("The natural skepticism of my readers is my safeguard"). In his editorial, Campbell goes along with this view: "The facts Russell states are facts. A man may well strike truth in what is meant as fiction."[4]

As far as Campbell and Russell were concerned, *Sinister Barrier* was a one-off gimmick. Over at *Amazing*, however, the idea that fiction could be interwoven with (alleged) fact struck a chord with Ray Palmer. Within a few years he was doing the same thing, on an industrial scale, in his own magazine. The result was the phenomenon known as the Shaver Mystery (see **FT127:36-41** and pp32-39).



> “The deros secretly foster wars, crimes and disasters while working among surface people...”

The author behind the "mystery" was Richard S Shaver, a former factory worker who first began corresponding with Palmer in 1943. Shaver's stories are not great fiction, and they were almost certainly heavily rewritten for publication by Palmer and other ghost writers. But the important thing about Shaver's stories – the thing that helped boost *Amazing*'s readership eightfold from 25,000 to nearly 200,000[5] – had nothing to do with writing quality. Like *Sinister Barrier,* Shaver's stories (there are more than 20 of them) were supposed to be based on a disturbingly paranoid "truth". He wrote about a vast subterranean world populated by degenerate humanoid creatures, called "deros", who interacted with surface dwellers by means of mind-control rays and the occasional abduction. Other technology to be found in the caves included interplanetary spaceships and "thought records" from ancient civilisations such as Atlantis and Lemuria.

Palmer was only too happy to acknowledge his creative debt to Eric Frank Russell and John Campbell: "*Sinister Barrier* was part and parcel of the same mystery we call 'The Shaver Mystery' today! [...] We submit that Shaver has not been original. Campbell and Russell did it first! And they did it well! We agree with them to the bitter end – Man does not rule this Earth, and it is based on fact that he does not."[6]

Russell almost certainly had tongue firmly in cheek when he wrote *Sinister Barrier.* It's equally likely that Shaver really believed what he wrote – not because it was true, but because he genuinely seems to have suffered from paranoid schizophrenia. As for Palmer, he carefully hedged his bets: "The Shaver stories are a mystery. They are not proved. But there is truth in them. Much truth. So much that it has excited many thousands of our readers. Your editor sees truth in the stories. Shaver says they are true, basically, except for the fictional treatment he must give them to enable us to publish them."[7]

With 70 years of hindsight, one of the most striking things about the Shaver Mystery is its uncanny foreshadowing of modern conspiracy theory. While the idea of subterranean deros may have lost its appeal, the *behaviour* of those deros is strongly reminiscent of the shadowy "Them" (aka the Illuminati or whatever) of today. As David Hatcher Childress wrote in 1999: "The deros have special beam weapon rays that they use to create as much trouble with the outside world as possible. The deros secretly foster wars, crimes and disasters

FATE
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VOLUME 1 NUMBER 1
THE TRUTH ABOUT THE FLYING SAUCERS
By KENNETH ARNOLD
MARK TWAIN AND HALLEY'S COMET
By HAROLD M. SHERMAN
INVISIBLE BEINGS WALK THE EARTH
By R. J. CRESCENZI
TWENTY MILLION MANIACS
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Many Other Startling Articles And Features
The FLYING DISKS

COURTESY FATE MAGAZINE

ABOVE: The first issue of *Fate* appeared in the spring of 1948, featuring Kenneth Arnold's seminal UFO sighting of the previous year. **BELOW:** Arnold's description and sketch of what he had seen. **ABOVE RIGHT:** John W Campbell, like Ray Palmer, believed there was a good chance the 'saucers' were from beyond the Earth.

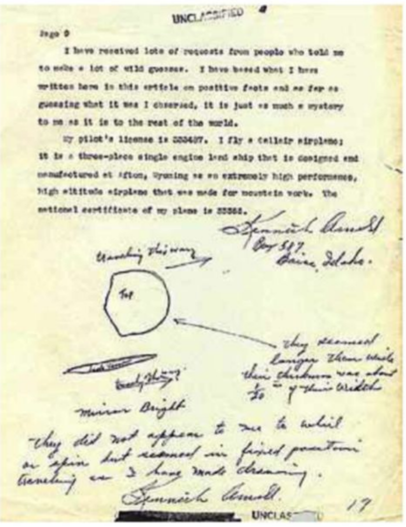
while working among surface people or using their controlling rays. These rays can create solid-looking illusions, nightmares, hypnotic compulsions and urges to commit a crime." [8]

INVENTING THE FLYING SAUCER

The new readers attracted to *Amazing* by the Shaver Mystery came from a much wider demographic than traditional science fiction fandom. Many of them had no interest in fiction at all, but were attracted by the (supposedly) non-fiction aspects of the Mystery. By August 1946, Palmer claimed the magazine had received "over 10,000 confirming letters from our readers". [9] The correspondence pages of *Amazing* became one of the first major forums where people could discuss the whole range of fortean subjects – anything from lost civilisations and mind control to alien spaceships visiting the Earth. Well before the flying saucer craze took off in the summer of 1947, the idea of alien visitation (factual as well as fictional) was an established fixture of both Shaver's stories and Palmer's editorials.

Here is Palmer writing in July 1946, almost a year before Kenneth Arnold's seminal UFO sighting: "If you don't think spaceships visit the Earth regularly, as in this story, then the files of Charles Fort, and your editor's own files are something you should see… And if you think responsible parties in world governments are ignorant of the fact of spaceships visiting earth, you just don't think the way we do." [10] And two months later, in response to a sceptical reader: "As for spaceships, you might say Shaver did not originate that, nor our readers. Ever read the books of Charles Fort? He's the culprit, if anyone is. Personally, we believe these ships do visit the Earth." [11]

It was for prescient comments like these that John Keel, in a famous article in *Fortean Times* (**FT41:52-57**), dubbed Palmer "The Man Who Invented Flying Saucers". Palmer's interest in UFOs heralded the beginning of the end of his tenure at *Amazing* – and the start of a new career as a publisher of non-fiction. As Keel explained in his *FT* article: "Palmer decided to put out an all-flying saucer issue of *Amazing Stories*. Instead, the publisher demanded that he drop the whole subject after, according to Palmer, two men in Air Force uniforms visited him. Palmer decided to publish a magazine of his own. Enlisting the aid of Curtis Fuller, editor of a flying magazine, and a few other friends, he put out the first issue of *Fate* in the spring of 1948." That first issue of *Fate* (see **FT237:44-49**) included a piece by Kenneth Arnold himself, entitled "The Truth about Flying Saucers".



UNCLASSIFIED

Page 9

I have received lots of requests from people who told me to make a lot of wild guesses. I have based what I have written here in this article on positive facts and as far as guessing what it was I observed, it is just as much a mystery to me as it is to the rest of the world.

My pilot's license is 333487. I fly a Callair airplane; it is a three-place single engine land ship that is designed and manufactured at Afton, Wyoming as an extremely high performance, high altitude airplane that was made for mountain work. The national certificate of my plane is 33355.

Kenneth Arnold
Box 587
Boise, Idaho.

Traveling this way

Top

they seemed longer than wide their thickness was about 1/20 of their width

mirror Bright

they did not appear to me to whirl or spin but seemed in fixed position traveling as I have made drawing.

Kenneth Arnold

17

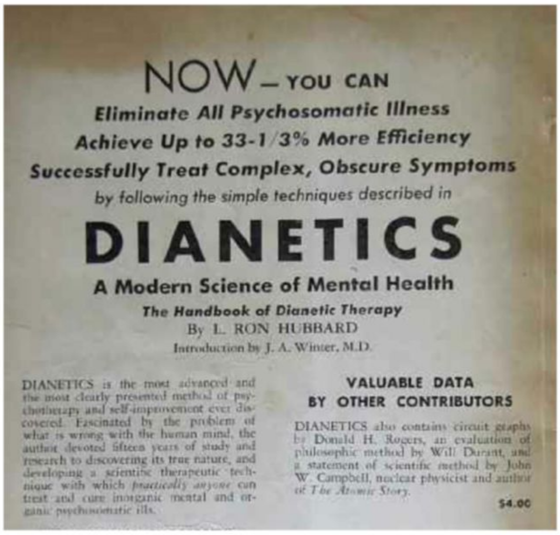
[redacted] UNCLASSIFIED

For Palmer (unlike most mainstream journalists of the time), the association of flying saucers with extraterrestrial spacecraft was an obvious one. The same was true of Palmer's counterpart at *Astounding*. In October 1947, in an editorial entitled "Flying Somethings", Campbell wrote: "Whatever they were, if real, and as described by those who believed they saw them, a few conclusions are fairly clear. They weren't products of a foreign terrestrial power... the same applies to a United States Government device… That would mean a fair chance that they were being piloted by visitors from outside." However, Campbell doesn't share Palmer's automatic assumption that the government knows all about the aliens – he suggests instead that the visitors are engaged in covert surveillance ("They'd be very wise to learn all they could before making their interest apparent"). [12]

BRASS QUACKS

In contrast to the anti-establishment Palmer, Campbell cultivated the image of a no-nonsense conservative. While *Amazing* was running the Shaver Mystery, the non-fiction pages of *Astounding* contained sober articles on radar, V-2 rockets and atomic energy. The letters column of *Astounding* (with the appropriately down-to-Earth title of "Brass Tacks") gave the recurring impression that most of its readers were professional engineers or scientists. Nevertheless, as Ron Goulart put it: "In later years Campbell was to reveal an almost Palmer-like fascination with quackery." [13]

At the start of 1950, *Astounding*'s readers still had no hint of the wackiness to come. Not just the factual articles, but even many of the stories were replete with "real science". The February and March issues included a serialised novel called *To the Stars*, which went so far as to contain a mathematical equation. It was a scientifically valid equation, too, being Einstein's formula for time dilation (an effect that should be highly relevant to science fiction, but is almost unanimously ignored by it). The author of that novel was one of



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VALUABLE DATA BY OTHER CONTRIBUTORS

DIANETICS also contains circuit graphs by Donald H. Rogers, an evaluation of philosophic method by Will Durant, and a statement of scientific method by John W. Campbell, nuclear physicist and author of *The Atomic Story*.

$4.00

UCLA LIBRARY

ABOVE LEFT: A back page ad for L Ron Hubbard's *Dianetics* from *Astounding Science Fiction*, August 1950. **ABOVE RIGHT:** Hubbard photographed in Los Angeles in 1950. **BELOW:** Hubbard wrote an article on 'Dianetics: A New Science of the Mind' for the June 1950 issue of *Astounding*.

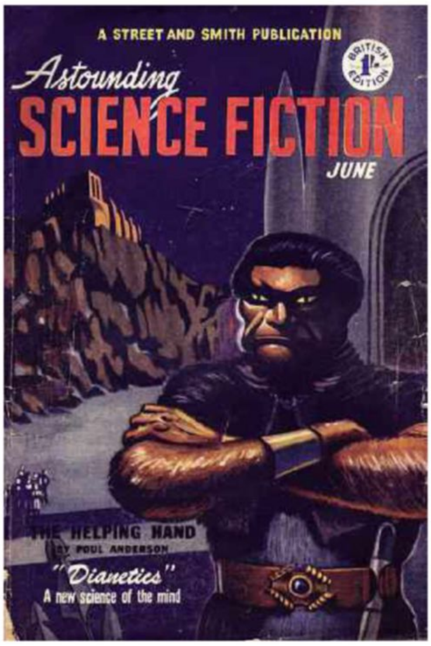
Campbell's regular contributors, somewhere in the second rank behind the likes of Heinlein and Asimov. His name – which, at the time, would have been completely unknown outside science fiction fandom – was L Ron Hubbard.

Today, of course, Hubbard is famous (or notorious) as the founder of the Church of Scientology. The roots of Scientology can be traced to a book he published in May 1950, called *Dianetics: The Modern Science of Mental Health*. In the same month, Campbell ran a long article by Hubbard in the pages of *Astounding*: "Dianetics: A New Science of the Mind". This wasn't just because he knew Hubbard and had printed many of his stories in the past – Campbell genuinely believed (to start with, at least) that Hubbard had discovered a scientifically rigorous alternative to mainstream psychology. In his editorial, Campbell is at pains to emphasise that "this article is not a hoax, joke, or anything but a direct, clear statement of a totally new scientific thesis".[14] Nevertheless, near the end of his article, Hubbard slips in a reference to that archetypal fact/fiction mashup, Eric Frank Russell's *Sinister Barrier*.

Campbell explained the background to the publication of Hubbard's article in a private letter the following year: "*Astounding Science Fiction* has long tried to spot at the laboratory stage the technical forces which will over the next decade or so have marked influence on the course of man's development. The article on Dianetics was published with that thought in mind. It was not published until I had personally investigated the practical results of Dianetics for over a year."[15] In another letter – written in 1956, after the creation of Scientology – Campbell makes a rather disturbing claim: "It was, as a matter of fact, I, not Ron, who originally suggested that it [Dianetics] should be dropped as a psychotherapy, and reconstituted as a religion. Because only religions are permitted to be amateurs."[16]

By the mid-Fifties Campbell had become disillusioned with Dianetics. The focus of his enthusiasm switched to ESP and other parapsychological phenomena. He was convinced these ought to be amenable to rigorous scientific analysis, in the same way that he had originally considered Dianetics to be a new, exact science. The pages of *Astounding* contained more and more stories on "psi" themes – too many of them for some readers, but never enough for Campbell himself. In 1969 he wrote that: "In the realm of ESP or psi stories I by no means succeeded in getting anywhere near the quantity or the quality I wanted."[17]

The roots of Scientology can be traced back to a book Hubbard published in 1950

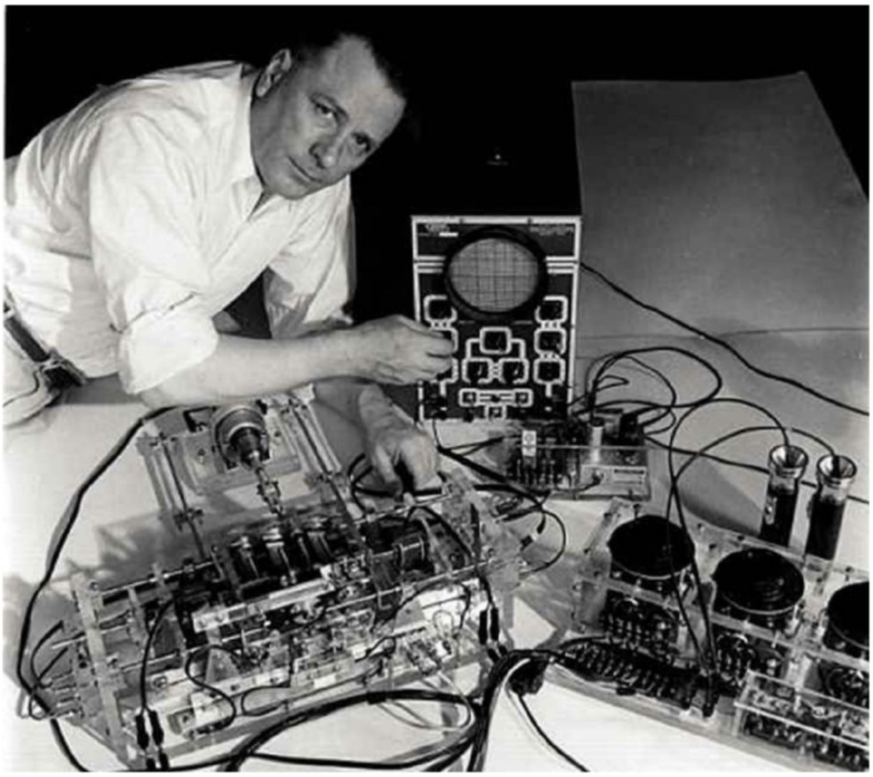


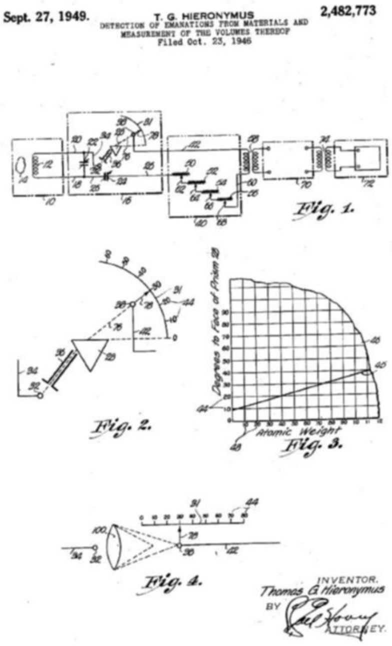
CAMPBELL'S MAGICAL MACHINES

On the "non-fiction" side, Campbell published several articles about a peculiar device called the Hieronymus Machine, after its inventor Thomas Galen Hieronymus. To quote Mark Pilkington: "The Hieronymus Machine has the unusual distinction of being the only psychically-operated – or psychotronic – device to have received a US Patent. On September 27, 1949 it was awarded patent 2,482,773 for the 'detection of emanations from materials and measurement of the volumes thereof'. Hieronymus claimed that his invention could detect 'Eloptic Radiation', a form of energy emitted by everything in our material world."[18]

Campbell built a Hieronymus Machine for himself, and was able to report to *Astounding* readers in June 1956 that: "My direct observation is that his machine works, but not by application of any known physical principle. I believe Hieronymus has discovered and applied a new principle, but not the one he names in his theory."[19] Two months later, he had made a remarkable discovery: that the machine "works just as well when it is *not* plugged into the power supply as when it is".[20] By the following year the situation was becoming distinctly surreal: "Reports coming in from various people indicate that workable, builder-scaringly successful models have been made from cardboard, plastic, Bakelite, rubber tiles, and sheet metal."[21]

If this is starting to sound like magic, that's exactly what Campbell believed it was. In a 1959 editorial, after commenting on the similarity of magical traditions around the world, he wrote that "the psi machines I've encountered work – and they work on precisely the same ancient laws of Magic that those wide-scattered peoples have, independently, accepted."[22]

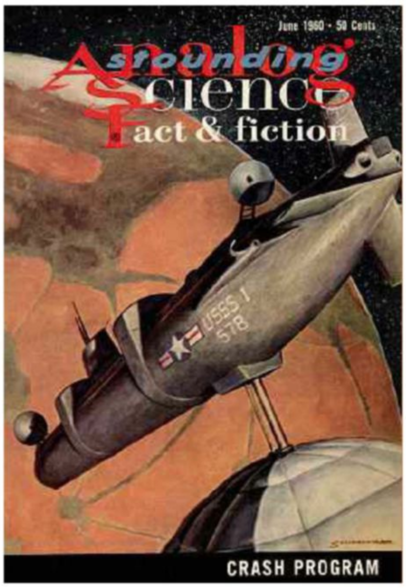




ABOVE LEFT: Norman L Dean and his Dean Drive. **ABOVE RIGHT:** A page from Dean's 1959 patent. **ABOVE RIGHT:** The Drive was discussed in *Analog*, June 1960.

In 1960, Campbell changed the name of his magazine from *Astounding Science Fiction* (which he had never really liked) to *Analog Science Fact & Fiction*. Although he retained his personal fascination with parapsychology, the name change heralded a shift in his editorial focus towards the hard sciences – physics and space exploration in particular. Did that mean an end to all those "weird science" articles that brightened up the *Astounding* of the 1950s? Not quite – there was still the Dean Drive.

The Dean Drive was reminiscent of the Hieronymus Machine in at least two respects. First, it boasted its very own patent – in this case US Patent 2,886,976, awarded to Norman L Dean in 1959 for a "System for Converting Rotary Motion into Unidirectional Motion". Secondly, its inventor claimed it could do something that mainstream scientists insisted was impossible. Unlike the Hieronymus Machine, however, the Dean Drive did not stray into the realm of the paranormal. It merely violated Newton's Third Law of Motion, by producing thrust without the expulsion of reaction mass. As such it can be thought of as a low-tech ancestor of the currently controversial EmDrive (see **FT332:14**), which is supposed to do with microwaves what Dean claimed he could do with springs and camshafts.



Another key difference from the Hieronymus Machine is that, despite writing numerous editorials about the Dean Drive, Campbell never said it could do all the things its inventor claimed – only that it deserved serious investigation. He pointed out that a reactionless drive is exactly what you need for interstellar space travel, and that if someone claims to have built one the scientific establishment has a responsibility to look at it. As Campbell wrote in 1960: "The principal point of the space drive problem, remember, was not the Dean Drive, or whether or not it worked… The point was, *nobody would look*, and that under the doctrine, the philosophy, of the scientific method, someone with a working model has a right to demand investigation."[23] He might have been talking about the EmDrive today.

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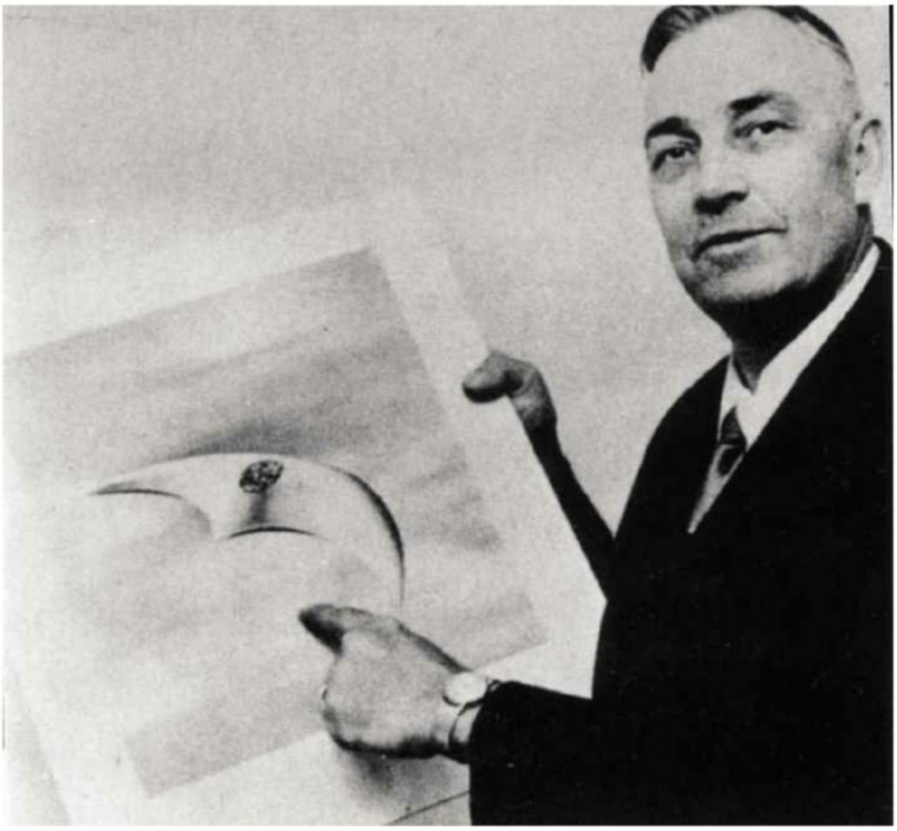
Was It a Bird? Was it a Plane?

Seventy years after pilot Kenneth Arnold's seminal UFO sighting, **NIGEL WATSON** asks whether a top secret test flight might have been responsible for the birth of the flying saucer age and lines up the unusual suspects...



ABOVE: Kenneth Arnold points to an artist's impression of what he saw in June 1947.

Kenneth Arnold's famous UFO sighting is so detailed and persuasive that it is hard to believe he saw anything other than solid, artificial objects streaking across the sky at high speed. The original newspaper reports describe him seeing nine thin "pie plate"-shaped objects, which looked as if they were nickel-plated, flying in formation.

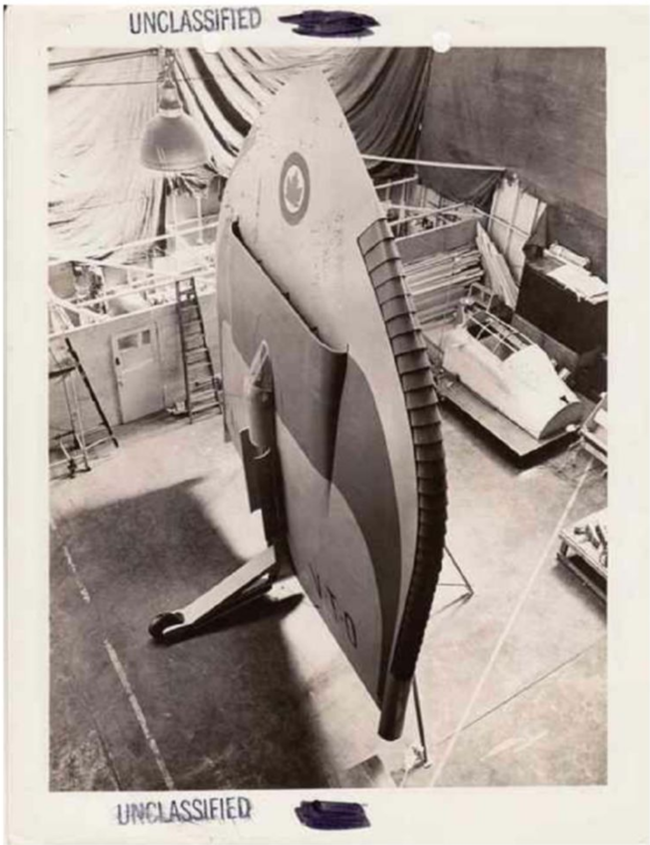
It seems unlikely that a temperature inversion, mirage, reflections or a similar phenomenon would cause such an illusion, and Arnold's first thought was that they were some form of jet aircraft. In a confidential statement to Army Air Force (AAF) Intelligence dated 12 July 1947, he noted: "I am convinced in my own mind that they were some type of airplane, even though they didn't conform with the many aspects of the conventional type of planes that I know." [1]

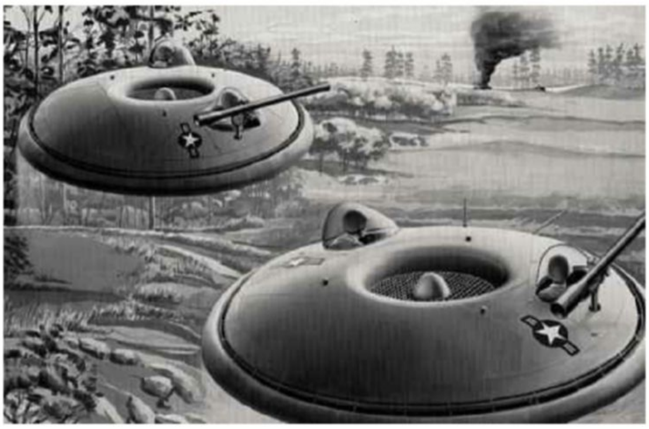
In a radio interview broadcast in April 1950, he reiterated that view: "I assumed at the time they were a new formation or a new type of jet, though I was baffled by the fact that they did not have any tails."

He thought they probably had something to do with the Army or Air Force, but he, and other pilots who witnessed UFOs, felt that if the US government didn't know what they were "it was only our duty to report it to our nation, and to our Air Force." [2]

On landing, he first told his story to flight instructors and helicopter instructors at Yakima airport, where his excitement was quickly quashed by a helicopter pilot who said: "Ah, it's just a flight of those guided missiles from Moses Lake." [3] Arnold had never heard of this missile base, and, anyway, the consensus was that he had witnessed something out of the ordinary.

Two days after his sighting, Arnold said that he had at first thought he was seeing snow geese; then, after deciding they must be jet planes, he had to admit: "I guess I don't know what they were – unless they were guided missiles." A Washington, DC, Army spokesman said that guided missiles like the V2 rocket travelled too fast to





US AIR FORCE
US ARMY

US AIR FORCE PHOTO

ABOVE LEFT: The AVRO Project Y wooden prototype. **TOP RIGHT:** Avrocars visualised as 'flying jeeps' in company literature. **ABOVE:** An Avrocar from above.

have been responsible, and in any case no experimental tests were being conducted in that area at that time. [4]

In an interview with the *Chicago Times* on 7 July 1947, the possibility that the objects were craft from another planet was mentioned. Whatever their origin, Arnold didn't think they were trying to hurt anyone. It was his view that because they made abrupt and fast turns "it would have been impossible for human pilots inside to have survived the pressure", indicating to him that they were guided from elsewhere. Indeed, AAF intelligence officers who interviewed him suggested that he had seen guided missiles of some new type. [5]

By 19 July 1947 Arnold was telling the Associated Press that the discs were not flown by a foreign power and the Army didn't seem to have an explanation for them, leading him to seriously think they had extraterrestrial origins. [6]

FLYING PANCAKES

There is the more credible possibility that he *did* see experimental aircraft on a top-secret test flight. On Kevin Randle's 'A Different Perspective' blog site, a lively discussion has been going on over the possibility that secret prototype aircraft were responsible. [7] (For a history of 'man-made UFOs, see Philip Jarrett, "Saucers from Earth', **FT188:32-38**.)

Brian Bells commented that Arnold's drawing of the 'saucers' "resembles a near if not perfectly drawn outline of the early 1950's AVRO Canada 'Project Y' that used a radical design featuring a radial flow gas turbine engine in the centre.

"While that design was officially contracted for production in 1952, it has been documented that English designer 'Jack' (John) Frost believed the Nazis had already created saucer aircraft and then attempted to design his own. While he arrived in Canada in June 1947, it has been suggested that he was already working on these design prototypes for the British parent company AVRO Ltd as early as 1945.

"If this is true, Arnold may have reported a squadron of prototypes coming from the Avro airfields just across the border for transport to USAAF fields in the southwest and California. Project Y could travel at Mach 2.5 and could easily hit the 1,500mph Arnold estimated."

He told them a Nazi flying saucer was destroyed before the Allies could capture it

Neal Foy responded with a few reasonable objections to this hypothesis: "If the AVRO Project Y was already built in 1947 then why was the contract for the prototype [signed] in 1952? From what I can tell it never went to more than a wooden prototype and was never produced. The figures for performance appear to be theoretical. The later Avrocar was a much simplified version of a Frost design and it was an abject failure."

Frost's first spade-shaped Avro VTOL (vertical take-off and landing) aircraft looked like Arnold's tail-less craft, but later Avro projects were saucer-shaped, conforming to how we imagine a 'flying saucer' would look rather than fitting the actual descriptions given by Arnold. [8]

It is recorded that in 1953, John Frost, who was then Avro Canada's Chief Designer, along with members of the RCAF and British Intelligence, had a meeting with an unnamed German engineer. He told them he worked on a Nazi flying saucer project during the war. It was successfully flown but the saucer craft, and all the information concerning it, was destroyed before the Allies could capture it. Whether or not the British and Canadians took this intelligence seriously, Frost had already begun work on Project Y and went on to develop saucer-shaped craft that were expensive failures. [9]

There was another prototype aircraft that also looked like what Arnold reported,

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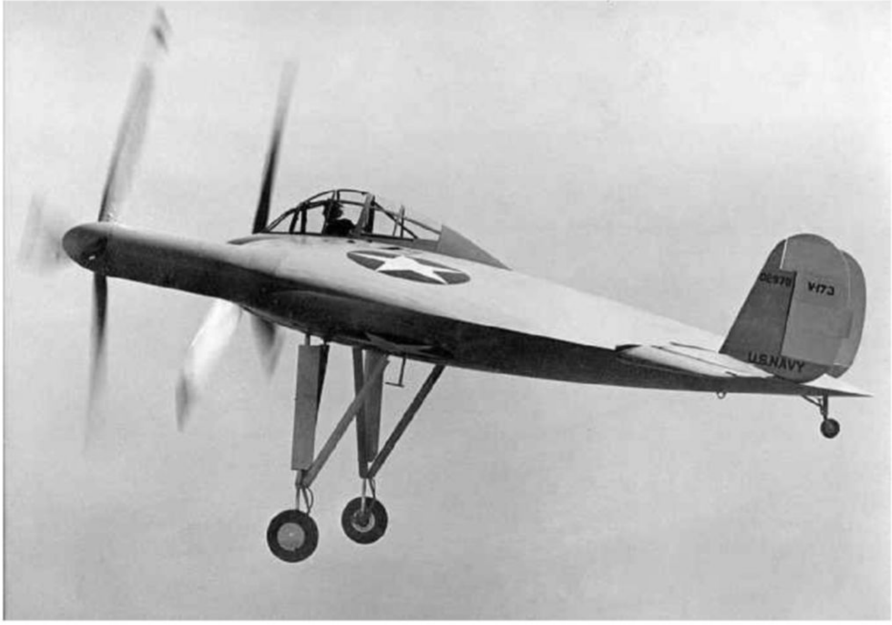

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BUILD A SOAP-BOX DERBY WINNER SEE PAGE 112

ABOVE LEFT: The Vought V-173 ‘Flying Pancake’ on its maiden flight in 1942. **ABOVE RIGHT:** The Pancake featured on the cover of *Mechanix Illustrated*, May 1947. **BELOW:** The Northrop YB-35/XB-35 bomber, an early attempt at a flying wing aircraft.

and unlike the Avro, actually took to the skies. This was the V-173, nicknamed the ‘Flying Pancake’. This unusual twin-engine aircraft was designed by Charles H Zimmerman for Vought in the 1930s. The first V-173 rolled out onto the tarmac of an airstrip on 23 November 1942, and was described as a “queer, saucer-shaped object on two long, stilted legs”. It has been claimed that these test flights in 1942 to 1943 caused panicked civilians to report sightings of strange flying objects to the authorities. A revamped version, the XF5U-1 or ‘Flying Flapjack’, with more powerful engines was tested in June 1947, but had already been cancelled by the US Navy in March 1947 in favour of more conventional jet aircraft. [10]

The main problem with the Flying Pancake explanation, which was offered as early as 6 July 1947, is that it was a slow-moving aircraft with a flat edge at the front with two large propellers and a circular rear with two tails, whereas Arnold’s objects had a circular front section and convex rear with no tail.

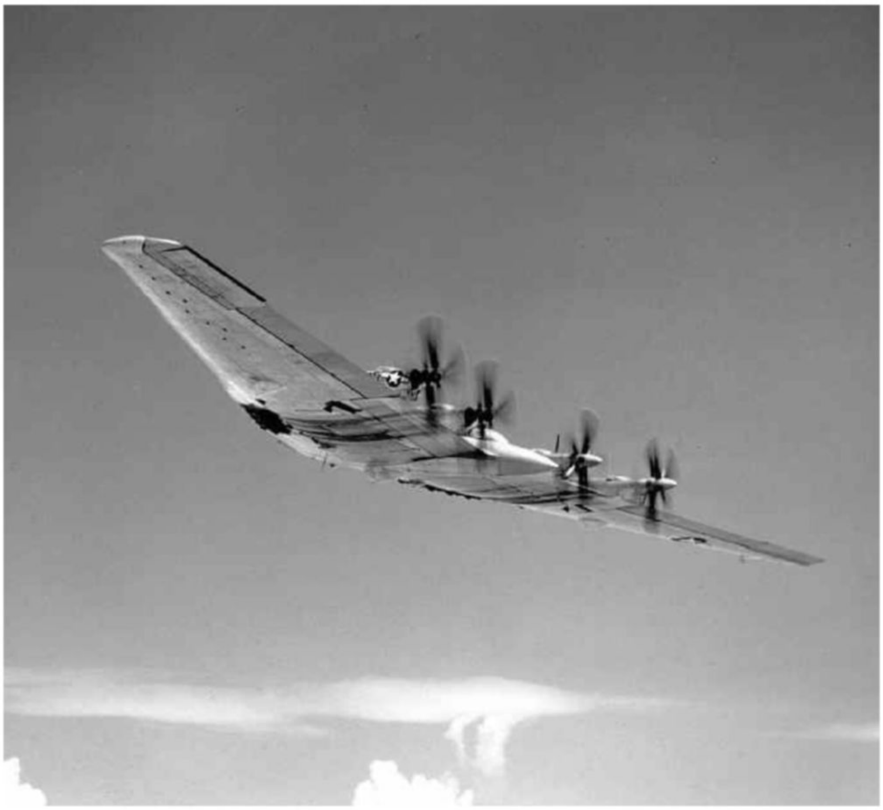
Also in early July 1947 Arnold made an important addition to his testimony, stating that the second-from-last craft in the formation was darker in colour than the others, had bigger and lighter-coloured wings and did not reflect sunlight. He described it as looking wraith-like in comparison to the others, which looked tadpole-like. [11]

Such a boomerang or bat-like craft would more closely resemble the flying wing aircraft being developed at this time. Before moving to Avro, John Frost had worked on the tailless, swept wing de Havilland DH 108 ‘Swallow’ jet aircraft in Britain. It was based on the German Messerschmitt Me 163 rocket plane, and it made experimental flights from May 1946 to May 1950.[12]

The first V-173 was described as a “queer, saucer-shaped object on two stilted legs”

It is also noteworthy that Moses Lake Army Air Base was used to test the swept wing Boeing B47 Stratojet bomber, which was based on research conducted by the Germans in WWII. The first test flight to Moses Lake was on 17 December 1947 though, so it couldn’t have been the cause of Arnold’s sighting. [13]

A more likely contender was the Northrop YB-35 bomber, first tested on 25 June 1946 and part of a programme to produce a flying wing aircraft that had been initiated during World War II. [14] A multitude of such



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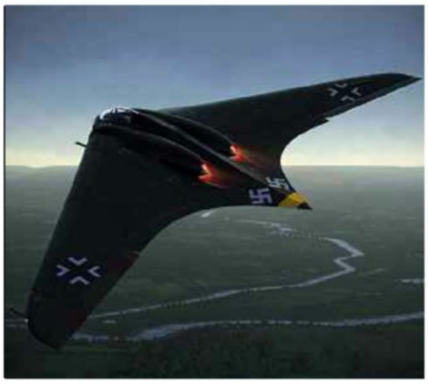

LEFT: The Boeing B47 Stratojet did fly from Moses Lake, but not until December 1947. **BELOW:** An artist's impression of the Horten Ho 229 bomber.

projects had arisen out of the conflict, the most notable being the German flying wing craft produced by the Horten brothers. Their designs for the Horten Ho 229 bomber look very much like Arnold's bat-like UFO, and the prototype was captured by the US military and sent to the USA.[15]

The Ho 229 and other saucer-like Nazi designs have been eagerly promoted as the origin of secret US or Soviet aircraft responsible for causing UFO reports (see Kevin McClure, 'Nazi UFOs', **FT175:42-47**). Yet, in June 1947 it seems very unlikely that any nation was able to fly one, let alone a formation of nine of them, over Mount Rainier.

NEW FRONTIER

If a real aircraft or missile was not responsible, perhaps some more mundane stimulus, like a flock of birds or a mirage, triggered an imaginative response from Arnold. In the immediate context, he was searching for a missing Curtis Commando C-46 transport plane and he later claimed that when the crashed aircraft was found the bodies of the victims were missing. Perhaps he thought that the unidentified objects were a danger to him.[16]

In a wider context, this was a time of remarkable and frightening new inventions and technology. Atom bombs, jets and rockets could now obliterate humanity and Cold War tensions meant this appeared to be a distinct, even imminent, possibility.

Significantly, just a month before his sighting, the May 1947 edition of *Mechanix Illustrated* shows the Flying Pancake aircraft on its front cover, and an article by Gilbert Paust enthusiastically states that a future Flying Flapjack fitted with a jet or rocket engine would be a sure bet to smash the supersonic sound barrier. It concludes: "So don't be amazed when one of these days you hear a whistling sound from the sky and see a blurred, circular object scaling across the heavens at a speed never before attained by man! It will be the Navy's Flapjack, the XF5U-1, breaking through another frontier in aviation's history."[17]

Whatever it was that he saw that day 70 years ago, Kenneth Arnold was amazed by it, and in response helped create the new frontier of ufology. If one believes Martin Kottmeyer, Arnold's misperception was of some "waterfowl", but it was coloured by the psychology of paranoia and Arnold unconsciously used his knowledge of high-tech aircraft to fill in the gaps.[18]

Ironically, Arnold's sighting was influenced by the flying wing designs of Frost, Northrop and the Horten brothers, which through the mistaken idea that he saw saucer-shaped craft led the US (and no doubt other nations and private inventors) to try to build 'saucers' of their own. In the process, the fantastic world of flying saucers took flight and the UFO age was born.

NIGEL WATSON is a veteran UFO reseacher and author of a number of books on the subject, including UFOs of the First World War: Phantom Airships, Balloons, Aircraft and Other Mysterious Aerial Phenomena *(2015).*

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THE HIEROPHANT'S APPRENTICE PRESENTS

BUILDING A FORTEAN LIBRARY

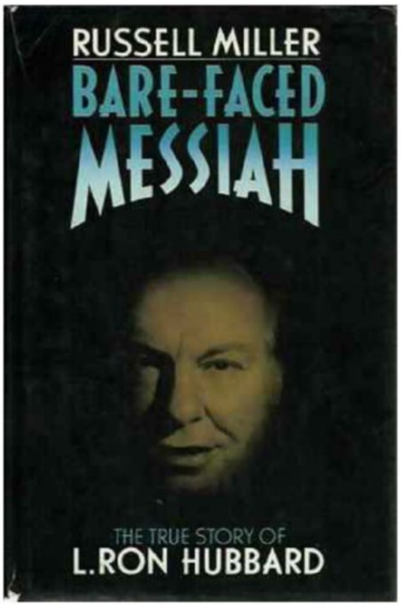
23. AN ANSWER FOR EVERYTHING

It's in the nature of doing their thing that forteans are intrigued by irrational beliefs and curious cults, up to and including secret societies. Scientology, not often mentioned in the pages of this august journal as we recall, manages to qualify for all three of those labels, and has developed a habit of suing anyone who said as much. Anyone who uttered a word against its founder, Lafayette Ronald Hubbard (1911–86), was liable to suffer even worse than legal action. The author of this issue's chosen volume found that out when researching his book: as the climax of a campaign of stalking and harassment, the defenders of the Hubbardian faith attempted to implicate him in an axe murder, in hopes of discrediting his efforts. This was almost small beer for Scientologists. They had already, in the mid-Seventies, infiltrated the US Government bureaucracy in order to steal and destroy documents critical of Hubbard and his following, once it became apparent that these might become embarrassingly public through the Freedom of Information Act. Unfortunately for them, they got caught, and sundry members, including Hubbard's wife (the main patsy), went to jail and/or were fined. How did it come to this? Russell Miller's *Bare-Faced Messiah* tells all.

Let's start by saying that it is impossible to summarise this book, as virtually every page contains some fresh revelation about Hubbard's boundlessly creative relationship to the truth whenever it concerned himself. This is apart from his peculiar cosmogony, concepts of people being 'pre-clear', 'clear', or 'Thetan', his obsession with reincarnation, and all the rest of the unique edifice of implausible inventions that passes for his theology, which can be explored at one's leisure elsewhere, if you have the strength and inclination. Here we'll concentrate on a few gems from the book about the man.

Pathological liar, gratuitous self-aggrandiser and fecund fantasist barely cover it. There seems to be almost nothing about himself that with brazen effrontery Hubbard did not manage either to misrepresent or to smother in mendacity. His childhood, according to him, was spent on his grandfather's 50,000-acre Montana ranch (which he later inherited), frolicking so with horses that he could ride before he could walk. His grandad was actually a respectable, if not particularly affluent, country veterinarian – in Montana, it *is* true – and no one to be ashamed of. But Hubbard didn't go for any kind of log-cabin-to-White-House myth: he always had to be up there among the élite.

His academic career was a disaster: achieving dismal grades in civil engineering and maths at George Washington University, he was put on probation and dropped out in his second year. But according to Hubbard, he not only graduated as an engineer but laid claim when it suited to being a qualified nuclear physicist. In reality, he managed but one class in 'atomic and molecular phenomena', for which he was awarded an F grade – a tad short of genius. While at university he learned to fly gliders, and good for him. But this is not the same as, with "virtually no training" becoming "recognised as one of the country's most outstanding pilots" and "barnstorming" through the Midwest. Hubbard never qualified to fly a powered aircraft. Nor did he hold any of the gliding records he later claimed.



All that was surely compensated by his prior teenage accomplishments. Miller writes: "At the age of 14, it seems, the inquisitive lad could be found wandering the Orient alone, investigating primitive cultures and learning the secrets of life at the feet of wise men and Lama priests. 'He was up and down the China coast several times in his teens from Ching Wong Tow to Hong Kong and inland to Peking and Manchuria.' In China he met an old magician whose ancestors had served in the court of Kublai Khan and a Hindu who could hypnotise cats. In the high hills of Tibet he lived with bandits who accepted him because of his 'honest interest in them and their way of life'. In the remote reaches of western Manchuria he made friends with the ruling warlords by demonstrating his horsemanship."

The truth is, Hubbard spent six weeks on Guam, where his father, a junior US Navy officer, was stationed, and on the way there with his mother stopped off at Hawaii, Yokohama and Kobe in Japan, Shanghai, Hong Kong and Manila. He seems to have been less than impressed by the natives in any of these places. Tibet, let alone horses, never quite came into it; such tales of far-flung travel and adventure are also to be found in Hubbard's prolific writings for pulp magazines (see pp40-45).

Hubbard was dishonest about most things, but perhaps his most disgraceful misrepresentation was of his less than illustrious, not to say farcical, career as an officer in the US Navy. To help obtain a commission he managed to charm various officers and politicians to write glowing testimonials – at least one of which, from Senator Robert M Ford, he wrote himself – in which it turned out that he had had photographs published in *National Geographic*, had displayed "leadership" in the Authors' League and the American Fiction Guild, had written 14 movies, was "a respected explorer" with "extended geographical and mineralogical knowledge" and "considerable influence in the Caribbean and Alaska". On top of which he held Master Mariner's tickets for “more types of vessels than any other man in the United States” – hence his being endowed, otherwise out of nowhere, with the title of ‘Captain’. Congressman Warren G Magnuson noted that: “An interesting trait is his distaste for personal publicity”, a characteristic no one else had noticed before and no one ever discerned afterwards. Thus festooned with such fictions, Hubbard became Lieutenant Junior Grade in the US Naval Reserve in July 1941. In due course he would claim to have seen action in “all five theatres of World War II”, to have been severely wounded, crippled and blinded, and to have been awarded 21 medals and palms (he later upped this to 28, or even 29). All of it was claptrap, a case of what real combat veterans call, through gritted teeth, ‘stolen valour’. Hubbard was entitled to four campaign medals, as was any land-bound cook or clerk, but it didn’t stop him audaciously claiming the others years later. The Navy politely declined to indulge his fantasy.

Hubbard spun his war stories to anyone who would listen, and spent years claiming to have had all manner of dire aches, pains and injuries in the hope that the Veterans’ Administration would up his pension. Doctors found no evidence of damage to justify any increase. He was indeed hospitalised in his last months in the Navy – for a duodenal ulcer. Not what most of us would call a war wound. His actual career as a commanding officer at sea was somewhat ignominious. Despite having already been assessed as “not satisfactory for independent duty assignment”, Hubbard managed to be given the captaincy of USS *YP-422*, a trawler being converted to a patrol boat. He was relieved of command before ever taking the ship for trials at sea, having royally got up the noses of senior officers, and was once again judged to be “not temperamentally fitted for independent command”. Hubbard was then sent for training to the Submarine Chaser Training Center in Miami. He turned up sporting dark glasses, which, writes Miller, he “light-heartedly explained… he was obliged to wear… as he had received a severe flash burn when he was serving as Gunnery Officer on the destroyer *Edsel*. He had been standing close to the muzzle of a five-inch gun which fired prematurely and while his injuries did not impair his vision, he found any kind of bright light painful…” (Odd that it didn’t impair his hearing.)

This wasn’t the end of his adventures with the *Edsel*. He told his friend Lt Thomas Moulton: “On the day the Japanese attacked Pearl Harbor, it seemed that Ron was landed from the *Edsel* on the north coast of Java in the Dutch East Indies, not far from the port of Surabaya, to carry out a secret mission. The *Edsel* was sunk a couple of days later [not quite accurate: she was sunk in March 1942] and went down with all hands. When the Japanese occupied the island, Ron took off for the hills and lived rough in the jungle. Once he was almost caught by a Japanese patrol and was hit in the back by machine-gun fire before he was able to make his escape. Those wounds still troubled him, he confessed. He often suffered severe pain in his right side and the bullets had damaged his urinary system, making it difficult for him to urinate. He was in bad shape for quite a while after being shot, but eventually he teamed up with another officer and they constructed a raft on which they sailed across the shark-infested Timor Sea to within one hundred miles of the Australian coast, where they were picked up by a British or Australian destroyer. It was, Moulton thought, a remarkable piece of navigation.” Indeed so. And a simple country boy like Hubbard couldn’t be expected to tell a British from a Strine accent, we suppose. Let alone read a sailor’s cap.

> “ALWAYS READ STUFF THAT WILL MAKE YOU LOOK GOOD IF YOU DIE IN THE MIDDLE OF IT.”
>
> *P.J. O’Rourke*

And so it was that the naïve and gullible Moulton became Hubbard’s second-in-command on his first sea-going command, of the sub-hunter *USS PC-815*. Given his record, Hubbard should have been put in charge of nothing more lethal than procuring postage stamps, but the miracle occurred. Typically he managed to get some self-promotion into the *Oregon Journal*, which described him as a “veteran sub-hunter of the battles of the Pacific and Atlantic… an old hand at knocking tails off enemy subs”, which was, not to put too fine a point on it, bullshit. But off sailed the ship from Portland, bound for San Diego, on 18 May 1943. After five hours at sea she encountered one, maybe two, enemy submarines – such luck for a would-be hero! Hubbard used all his depth charges in his attack, but no tell-tale wreckage, oil, or corpses appeared. Two USN blimps, a pair of Coastguard patrol boats, and two more USN sub-chasers jointed the hunt, replenishing the *PC-815*, and between them dumped about 100 depth charges to no appreciable effect. After 68 hours of continuous action, Hubbard was recalled to port, where he filed an 18-page report on the incident. Reviewing all the evidence, Admiral Frank Jack Fletcher, Commander Northwest Sea Frontier, “swiftly came to the conclusion that the hundred depth charges dropped during the ‘battle’ had probably killed a few fish but no Japanese”. No other commander present had detected any enemy sub or evidence thereof. It seems Hubbard’s sonar had picked up an undersea magnetic deposit and proceeded to take the edge off its day. In later years, Hubbard maintained the sub he had ‘killed’ off the Oregon coast was the Imperial Japanese Navy’s Kaidai VII-class sub *I-176*, which was perhaps rash, for it’s established that the *I-176* was actually destroyed in the *western* Pacific by the USSs *Franks*, *Haggard* and *Johnston*, on 16 May 1944. Hubbard’s little adventure was a small-scale marine version of the ‘Battle of Los Angeles’, in which enthusiastic AAA gunners lit up the sky trying to down ‘enemy aircraft’ that weren’t there, and over-enthusiastic UFO buffs now reckon was… a UFO.

The following month the *PC-815* took part in an exercise that finished early, and Hubbard decided on a little gunnery practice to brighten the end of the day. He sailed unwittingly into Mexican territorial waters and loosed off a few 3-inch rounds in the direction of the (Mexican) Coronados Islands, following that with sustained volleys of small-arms fire. Without authorisation, Hubbard then dropped anchor for the night. The Mexicans were not best pleased, and a USN Board of Investigation ensued. Miller reports that “Rear-Admiral EA Braisted, Commander, Fleet Operational Training Command, Pacific, rated Lieutenant LR Hubbard as ‘below average’ and noted: ‘Consider this officer lacking in the essential qualities of judgement, leadership and cooperation. He acts without forethought... Not considered qualified for command or promotion at this time. Recommend duty on a large vessel where he can be properly supervised.’” And that is about the sum of Hubbard’s career as a war hero.

Critics have called Hubbard a paranoid (true), schizophrenic (arguable), narcissistic (indubitable, as we’ve seen), a pathological liar (as we’ve also seen), tyrannical (accurate), and suffering delusions of grandeur (correct). He was also an almost hypnotic charmer, which may explain how he became a bigamist, omitting to divorce his second wife before marrying his third. Few things illustrate his paranoia better – as Miller copiously illustrates – than his habit of transforming into an enemy, instantly, anyone who ventured any criticism of him, Dianetics, or Scientology. This led to his denouncing various people as Nazis or communists to the FBI. These accusations tended to fall on stony ground, as the FBI had already encountered Hubbard and judged him a bit of a mental case. His defence against detractors was to attack, and make every attempt to dig up any sexual, financial, fiscal or political indiscretion he could

HULTON ARCHIVE / GETTY IMAGES

ABOVE: L Ron Hubbard outside Saint Hill Manor, Sussex, which he purchased in 1959 and which would later become Scientology's UK headquarters.

(or rather that his followers could) to use against them. If need be, a few good juicy lies and slanders would do. Thus there came into being a cadre of the Hubbardian shafted and disillusioned, whistle-blowers all too ready to expose his weirdnesses.

Hubbard's essential problem was that he could not conceive that anyone could fail to be entranced by him and his loopy ideas – and was consequently baffled, or went into conspiracy-victim mode, when they were not impressed. So, in 1966, he turned up in Rhodesia, offering to assist the Crown Colony's government in its newly self-declared independence. He never clapped eyes on Prime Minister Ian Smith or got beyond the steps of government offices, but that didn't stop Hubbard later quoting a few gems that dropped from Smith's lips over an imaginary dinner together. Likewise, having established his Sea Organization, he turned up in Greece in 1968 and made fawning overtures to the then government, an ultra-right-wing *junta* of army colonels, in hopes of setting up Scientology's world headquarters there and perhaps (Miller plausibly suggests) so influence the government as, in effect, to take it over. Hubbard went so far as to rename his three decrepit ships after ancient Greek gods. That effort didn't get far either, and the torturing (we have friends who can show you the scars) and murdering colonels were ousted in 1974. Then there was Morocco, where Hubbard managed to set up a programme to train the secret police using Dianetic techniques. His hoped-for infiltration of the government fell apart when his best contact turned out to be a major plotter against the King and blew his (own) brains out. Hubbard's *penchant* for unstable régimes and his grandiose ambitions scarcely need analysis, but his abiding talent for choosing the wrong side does tend to mark him as significantly lacking in political *nous* – or, more bluntly, as a self-deluding clown.

The 'Sea Org' itself was set up in 1967, ostensibly because Hubbard "was returning to his former 'profession', that of an explorer" (at which in reality he had been incompetent and a failure). The true reason was that he wanted to stay on the high seas in order to avoid inquisitive land-based governments, some of which did in due course indict and convict him *in absentia*. His three ships were crewed almost exclusively by followers with no experience of seafaring, with farcical if sometimes life-threatening consequences. Such professional seamen as were hired left as soon as they could. But at sea or in foreign ports, beyond scrutiny, Hubbard could become an absolute dictator, and he did. He instituted the Rehabilitation Project Force (RPF), in effect a penal battalion to which the slightest offence (especially to Hubbard himself) would condemn the delinquent to grim vittles, punishingly hard work, and accommodation in a filthy lightless chain locker. Then there was overboarding. Anyone out of line but not deemed unworthy enough to join the RPF was summarily heaved over the side of the ship. The one redeeming feature of this arbitrary justice was that it occurred only in port. But there is a kind of justice in the world. The Sea Org's ships turned up out of the blue and its crews were distinctively secretive, and rumours grew that they were actually in the service of the CIA – which eventually brought about a major riot in Madeira. As suspected spies, Hubbard and his shambolic flotilla became unwelcome virtually everywhere.

Miller's book has been criticised for not exploring why Hubbard's followers put up with him. Miller himself doesn't spend much space philosophising on this, it's true, but time and again in interviews his victims say that Hubbard's *ideas* and teachings were so attractive they thought his personal aberrations must eventually be for the good. This seems to be the trick of successful dictators everywhere.

Read Miller's book. Every page will amaze you.

Russell Miller, *Bare-Faced Messiah*, Silvertail Books 2015 (first published by Michael Joseph/Penguin Books 1987)

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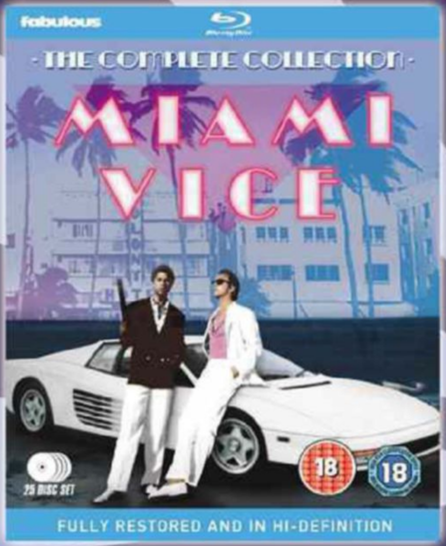
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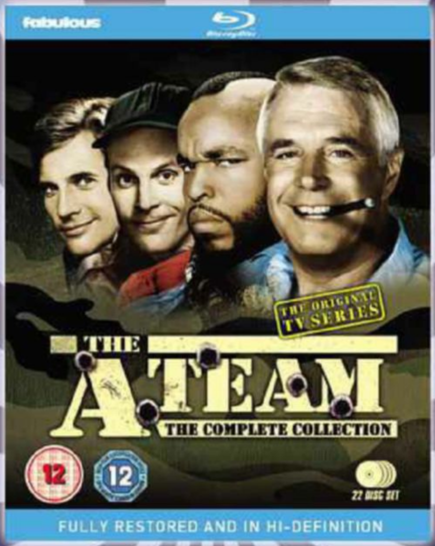
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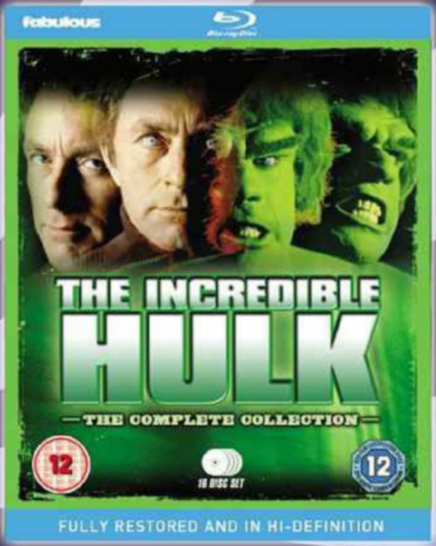
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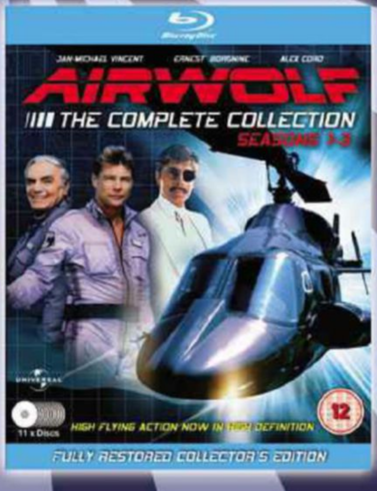
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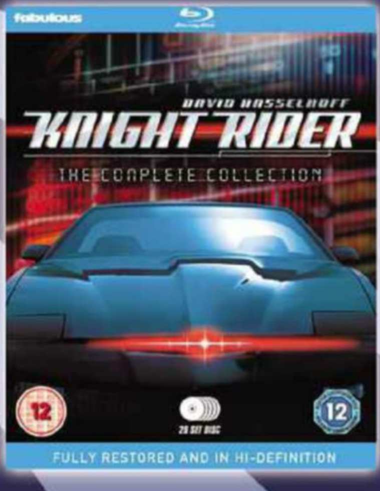
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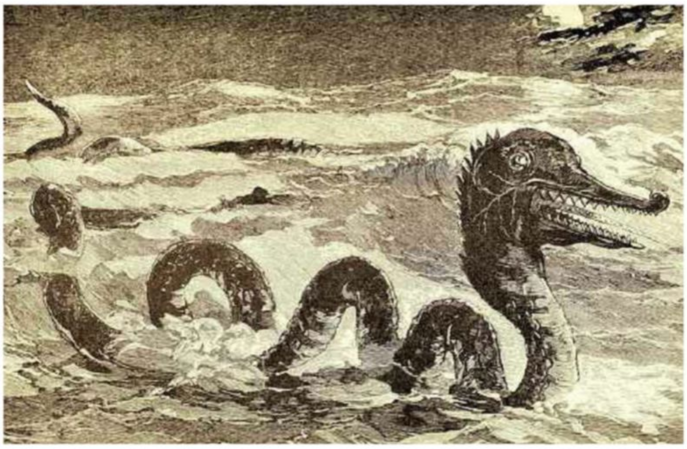
The siren song of the sea serpent

THEO PAIJMANS recalls the Dutch zoo director whose obsession cost him his career

In October 1892, Anthonie Cornelis Oudemans, eminent zoologist and director of the Zoological Garden at The Hague, published his book *The Great Sea-Serpent*. It was the first critical study of a problem that had been vexing sailors and scientists for centuries. In this massive tome, numbering nearly 600 pages, the result of an intense, three-year study, Oudemans had come to the conclusion that the sea serpent was real.

He baptised the creature – which he thought an unknown seal species – 'Megophia Megopias'. A reviewer in the *Army and Navy Gazette* was impressed by his approach: "After giving a bibliography of the subject, an account of the many cheats and hoaxes, and of a number of 'would-be sea serpents' as well as a record in detail of a great many observations, and an analysis of the various explanations that have been offered, he proceeds to collate very carefully all the material he has so laboriously brought together. We believe no one has preceded him in this method." The *Times* was less enthusiastic: "We hardly know what to make of a big book entitled the *Great Sea-Serpent*… At first it looks like an elaborate scientific treatise, and so no doubt it is seriously regarded by its author; but, on closer examination, it rather presents itself as a cumbrous and elaborate, albeit quite unconscious, joke." A newspaper from The Hague suggested in a brief review that from now on sea monsters might be taken more seriously, but immediately below the review it had placed an account of a *fata morgana*: a hint, perhaps, of what the newspaper really thought. The scientific community kept Oudemans's study at arms' length. In the *Illustrated London News* Andrew Wilson, used by Oudemans quite a few times as a source, wrote dismissively: "As for Oudemans' seal theory, there is so much drawing on 'what might be' involved in its acceptation that I must discard it altogether."

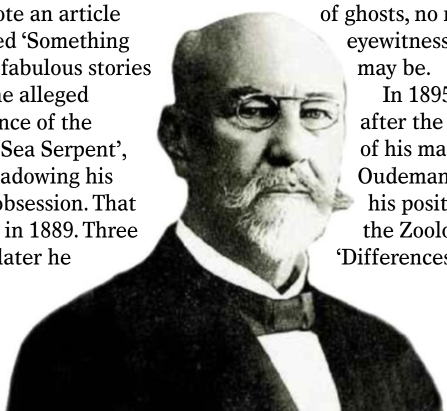


BELOW: AC Oudemans. **LEFT:** A sea serpent from one of his books.

Oudemans was born on 12 November 1858. His father was an eminent astronomer and director of the observatory of Utrecht. A crater on Mars has been named after him. In 1885, Oudemans was appointed director of the Zoological Gardens of The Hague. Originally, his zoological research involved mites, tiny creatures that bear little resemblance to the elusive leviathan of the seas. Oudemans also discovered various insect species and even a new species of small African primate, all pointing to a solid scientific career. But in 1882 he wrote an article entitled 'Something about fabulous stories and the alleged existence of the Great Sea Serpent', foreshadowing his later obsession. That began in 1889. Three years later he had amassed 187 reports, had read anything on the subject that he could lay his hands on and had finished his spectacular study. The scientist Chladni, who had collected all he could find on meteorites and had proven their existence, was his shining example. Oudemans stated in his preface: "This work has the same purpose as Chladni's had in 1829. It is [the author's] sincere hope that it may meet with the same success." The *Times* reviewer pointed out that the difference between Chladni's meteorite reports and Oudemans's sea serpent sightings was that meteorites exist and can be seen, but a sea serpent carcass has never been found; therefore its existence is as unproven as that of ghosts, no matter how many eyewitness accounts there may be.

He had come to the conclusion that the sea serpent was real

In 1895, three years after the publication of his magnum opus, Oudemans resigned from his position as director of the Zoological Gardens. 'Differences of opinion with his superiors' was the reason given. He moved to Arnhem, where he taught biology at the same school where he had once studied. One of his pupils was Escher, later to become a famous artist, with whom Oudemans was on friendly terms. Oudemans was a very private person who he did not share much about his personal life. He married twice, but tragedy struck on both occasions with the untimely deaths of his spouses. He spent the last two decades of his life quietly in the company of Mrs JB Bruyn, also a schoolteacher. As before, he studied mites, the topic of most of the 584 papers he wrote during his scientific career. But occasionally Oudemans returned to his mythical monsters of the deep, for instance with a series of articles published between 1903 and 1906. The siren song of the sea serpent was too strong to resist. And when in 1933 the monster of Loch Ness became world news, his interest was piqued. He corresponded with British researchers and collected all he could on the case. A year later Brill and Luzac, the original publishers of his sea serpent book, issued his findings on the case in a slim pamphlet as *The Loch Ness Animal*. In 1935, he penned four articles on the monster for a Dutch magazine – his final words on sea serpents. In 1937, he briefly spoke out: "The future will learn whether I have judged rightly or wrongly." After a brief illness, Oudemans died on 10 January 1943. *The Great Sea-Serpent* outlived him. It was reprinted many times and is currently freely accessible on the Internet.



***THEO PAIJMANS** contributes regularly to FT and other publications. He is the author of* The Vril Society *and* Free Energy Pioneer: John Worrell Keely.

Death and the borders of reality

JENNY RANDLES shares a personal experience of how the end of life tests the limits of our knowledge and beliefs

The week before I wrote this piece my mother died in front of me following a brave fight against a ravaging illness. I had been a carer for 14 years following her major stroke in 2003, which meant that she required assistance with everything, but it was only ever a pleasure and a privilege. Whilst this change in my life arrived unexpectedly and meant that I stopped writing books, curiously, it also allowed me to experience the borders of fortean reality and questions about what it means to be human.

Events like this are hard to talk about and so most of us find coping mechanisms that push them into the background. But when we take notice of the small things that happen during any deeply trying period, our minds can be focused on questions that we otherwise choose not to contemplate – such as, what is consciousness? Is it a product purely of biology or can it function on another level? Can we know and even choose our own destiny?

All who were with mum in her final hours believe she *decided* it was her time to leave. It was extraordinary watching her move consciously away from the pain and the trauma as disease attacked her body. Despite the difficulty of communicating since the stroke and being at a low ebb with the new illness, somehow she still knew what she was doing and that it was time 'to move on'. Everyone could see that she had purposefully chosen her own path; indeed, she looked serene and happy, and believed that she was setting out on a journey toward someone who was waiting for her.

JENNY RANDLES

ABOVE: The author's mother carrying the Olympic torch in May 2012. **OPPOSITE**: The 'Witch Way' branding produced by the author's brother for the X43 bus.

This someone was my father – who died in 1995 – whose photo she clutched tightly for those last 36 hours after clearly deciding to be with him. Since January, when she first contracted the infection that ultimately killed her body, she had been pointing around the room saying that she could see my dad and that he was telling her it was time to go. I kept trying to assure her that there was nobody there and that she would pull through. I even resorted to photographing the empty space to prove it. But she was adamant that he was in the room, and often spent more time watching 'him' with interest and delight than the world around her. It was unnerving and yet, oddly, not at all scary.

Much as I tried to persuade myself that she was just seeing things, perhaps because of the antibiotics, I realised that she believed that her time was approaching – and that I was unable to accept something that she somehow instinctively knew. Each time I asked her to fight on, she looked at me pityingly, as if I could not understand her lack of concern for the physical or the strength of her desire to get to where she wanted to be.

> *I kept trying to asssure her that there was nobody there...*

She did try – for the family, I am sure – but the longer it went on, and as the days drifted by, the clearer it was that she wanted to go. She spent her last day with my dad in spirit and quite uninterested in anything else. She knew absolutely that she was dying and at this point – when her consciousness ought to be disintegrating – she looked for all the world to have made one of the most conscious decisions of her life: to go swiftly and avoid putting us under further strain.

But there was another rather odd reason that I knew her time was short. It was around midnight on Monday 15 May and I knew that Tuesday was about to arrive and that this would be the day.

How did I know this, clearly enough to announce it to my brother? Because 46 years ago, mum had told me that all the women on her side of the family died on a Tuesday. It was a bit of family lore that went back generations, and they all just accepted it – though I had no idea how this 'tradition' came about.

When mum told me this, in January 1971, my grandmother had been taken ill while staying with us for Christmas in our small terraced house in Manchester. We had a bed in the living room for her, and I watched in awe as my grandmother spent what were the last days of her life talking animatedly to figures that she could see in front of her in the corner of the room but that none of the rest of us could perceive. She believed them to be her own parents, who had died before I was born. To her they were 'out there' waiting to greet her and ease her passage. She was in no way afraid of this, and eager to join them. Then Tuesday morning arrived and gran calmly departed, as if it were simply time to go home to the Rossendale Valley as she had done after so many previous trips.

Other relatives have followed the Roberts family tradition, and I have just grown to accept it. I did once talk to a psychologist, and he was convinced that it started as a coincidence, when a couple of deaths likely happened on this day of week, and then became a self-fulfilling prophecy when someone was ill and a Tuesday approached. I can see the logic of this and how it might apply in this case. My only doubts centre on how few people in these final stages of illness are even likely to be aware of the fact that Tuesday is approaching. During my years as a carer, and especially in those final months, I often forgot what day of the week it was – because every one of them was exactly the same, with a cycle of medical, cleaning and caring regimes that were necessarily unchanging.

Growing up, I knew that my grandmother was supposedly psychic. It was she who inspired my interest in these strange areas of human experience, claiming

that she could 'move' kitchen utensils by staring at them. I was sure at the time that I saw them move – now, of course, I doubt those memories. It was also common for her to arrive on our doorstep in Manchester, bags packed ready to stay, saying that she 'knew' she had to come as either my brother or I was 'poorly'. Despite having no phone at her home in the rural Pennines and a 20-mile (32km) bus journey being the only way to get to us, she was always right.

The bus that she caught continues to run today; it's still called the X43, but is now branded as the 'Witch Way' because it passes through areas rich in lore about women who could see 'beyond'. And, in a neat fortean coincidence, my brother – whom she'd caught the bus to visit because she 'knew' when he was ill as a child – is director of the company that created the branding for the 'Witch Way' bus.

Just before she died in 1971, Gran had announced to my mum that she did not want certain relatives at her funeral as they had fallen out with her recently. Mum smiled and said okay; but, of course, she did invite them. However, on the day, these relatives never made it to the funeral, although everyone else who'd been invited did. They said afterwards that for the first time in their lives they got lost and ended up driving in circles around Bury – a place they knew well – until eventually finding the way just after the ceremony was over. We all smiled at the thought of Gran somehow misdirecting traffic from the other side, but nobody was willing to laugh entirely at the idea.

Of course, most people will read such tales and reasonably assume that they are simply down to chance. They may be, but I have interviewed many close encounter witnesses over the years equally adamant that they 'know' when a UFO is nearby – as if they are somehow attuned to its presence via some hidden bond; and quite a few of these cases happen not in the traditional, physical manner but when the witness is 'out of the body'.

I met the Day family at their home in Aveley, Essex, 40 years ago. They were intuitive and creative like Gran, and like her they'd had numerous psychic experiences of 'knowing' things or of objects moving around the house. Then, on 27 October 1974, driving home from a family night out, they suddenly encountered a strange bank of green mist straddling the highway and rode into the Twilight Zone.

It was like many other 'alien contacts' in several ways – they recalled being 'taken' into a hovering craft and meeting strange beings that showed them images of the Earth and their benevolent, possibly supervisory, interactions with humanity. But in other regards, it was different, because they were viewing these things from an 'out-of-body' perspective, not in the manner of a 'near-death experience' – floating over the ceiling seeing your body below – but watching from a disembodied 'inner self' inside the UFO, looking down at their inert bodies which were still in the car on the highway below.

All of this takes me back to January 1971, and the night before Gran's funeral. I was staying at a friend's house, sleeping in a bedroom where I had never slept before because our small terrace was being used by relatives staying over. It was on this night that I had my one and only, powerfully vivid, out-of-body experience. I awoke with a start in the night and was floating over the bed surrounded by a pale glow. I could see all around me and look down on the bed below where I – or at least my body – was lying a few feet away, seemingly oblivious to the 'other me' floating up there looking down.

The moment was brief but the memory indelible. As I realised exactly what was happening it was as if I snapped a gigantic elastic band that 'twanged' me back into my body. I sat bolt upright and, of course, never got back to sleep, but took in the detail of the room as dawn broke: it was real, but identical to the unfamiliar room I 'saw' whilst floating in that eerie glow. Again, I am sure that most people will regard this as a dream or an hallucination and I have been told, by the psychologist I mentioned earlier, that it was most likely induced by the stress of going through that first close family funeral whilst still a teenager.

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WITH THANKS TO MCKENNA BROTHERS

On the surface that makes perfect sense; but when you have experienced something as profoundly shocking as this, it is less easy to embrace the solace of cold logic. It feels as if something more is involved, and you inevitably wonder if there are things going on that we only glimpse every now and then, in those moments when fate shines a flashlight onto the otherwise invisible tethers that bind together the fuzzy boundaries of our reality.

Whilst my experiences are very personal and, quite rightly, should not persuade anyone reading this that they 'mean' anything on a wider scale, I have discovered that I am not alone in sharing these insights. I have been reading a moving online forum [1] in which nurses and doctors recount their experiences of being with patients in the final hours of their lives. One interesting aspect is how often the sort of things that I have seen happen 'by chance' have been witnessed routinely by these professionals. Many seem to gain solace from them, and to suspect that this is not just imagination at work but a sign of what we all might one day find ourselves confronting.

I was forced to contemplate this again when the funeral home called to say that we could view my mother. One of her oldest friends wanted to be there so we could comfort one another. And out of the blue, she told me that recently she awoke in the middle of the night feeling very ill and believed that she was dying.

"I was wide awake and never got back to sleep afterwards," she insisted. She had prayed, thinking that, at her age, this was probably 'it', but found herself 'floating' along a corridor with several doors leading off – one of which she was drawn towards but told not to enter as she "needed to return".

Instead she saw ahead a bright light that she felt drawn towards as it emitted a feeling of love and protection. As she drifted into it she could see a small hillside with beautiful flowers on it, and standing there was her son, smiling. He had died as a young man, many years ago, following complications from an asthma attack. She had never gotten over this awful loss, but seeing him there alive and well filled her spirit with hope and peace. She said he told her to "go back" because "it is not your time". She argued briefly, but heeded his words, began to move swiftly backwards and was soon in her bed filled with joy and starting to feel better. In fact, she did need medical treatment and was perhaps 'nearer death' than she had realised.

I told her I had heard many people's stories like this one – a classic 'near-death experience' – and that she was not alone as she seemed to believe. They are surprisingly common, as readers will know; perhaps they represent nothing more than wish fulfilment, or perhaps there's more at work here that might tell us something interesting. As with most fortean experiences, they prompt us to look for the universal patterns that underpin our everyday lives and force us to consider explanations that may be mundane or divine.

JENNY RANDLES is a veteran UFO researcher, author of numerous books on ufology and fortean phenomena and a regular columnist for Fortean Times*.*

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Clap hands if you believe in fairies

Fairies were recast as demons (and people who liked them condemned as wicked) when the 15th century Church decided that belief in them was incompatible with basic Christian beliefs

Elf Queens and Holy Friars

Fairy Beliefs and the Medieval Church

Richard Firth Green

University of Pennsylvania Press 2016
Hb, 285pp, notes, bib, ind, £47.00, ISBN 9780812248432

"Hot, isn't it?" said the elf-queen to Sir Launfal as she lay stripped to her waist in a jewelled pavilion. After sex, she gave him limitless riches and a place in the country. If this was what fairies were like, the Church was going to have a hard time persuading people they should be shunned. "Do you believe in fairies?" was one of the questions posed in the confessional, and shouting "Yes, oh yes!" to your clerical Tinkerbell was not wise.

Richard Firth Green has traced the darkening of the European mind as thinkers rejected the idea of a middle rank of spirits, neither saved nor damned. His title comes from a passage in Chaucer: where once the elf-queen danced, now all that can be found is a friar busily exorcising the spirits that he has stigmatised as demons. In particular, Green deals with three aspects of fairy tradition to which the Church gave a new, more sulphurous explanation. These were the belief that fairies could marry people and have offspring of mixed race, that fairy changelings could be substituted for human children, and that people could be carried away to Faerie and live forever in that undetermined country. These beliefs were incompatible with basic Christian understandings of the world, and something had to be done about them.

But imposing a black-and-white theology on the ambiguities of popular tradition was never going to be easy. The clergy were a literate minority in an oral world where knowledge about fairies was taken for granted. A good preacher should decry the superstitions of the rich as well as the poor, but in practice they didn't like to curse the hands that fed them. And if the aristocracy believed in an Otherworldly realm, it was often for the best of reasons; in 1359 Bertrand du Guesclin, the Constable of France, married a fairy called Tiffany. She was famous for her good advice, but then that was to be expected; fairies had the best of everything.

So what was it that made the European Church of the 14th and 15th centuries so determined to wipe out opposition? They could have adopted a live-and-let-live policy, as happened in Islam, where the *djinn* are seamlessly integrated into cosmology. And the clerisy didn't always stick to the script; one Bishop of Winchester used to reminisce about the afternoon he spent with King Arthur, come from Færie for a bit of hunting. But bit by bit, the theologians ironed out all pluralistic notions. There were only angels and devils. And fairies were not angels, so…

This intellectual solution led to theories just as bizarre as the beliefs they were meant to replace. Consider the icky mechanism of the incubus – demon makes ærial female body, body has sex with a man, demon flies through air with sperm bank, demon makes ærial male body, body has sex with woman, and finally woman has baby. This is nothing if not elaborate, but it is consistent with contemporary knowledge in a way that fairy lovers were not. The doctors of Paris wanted a world which would be understood through one totalising frame of explanation. Substitute science for theology, and this ambition sounds very contemporary.

> *"The Constable of France married a fairy called Tiffany, famous for her good advice"*

Fairies were *phantastici*, things of the imagination, and that made them suspect. The distinction between illusion and reality was gradually superseded by a dichotomy between the demonic and godly. By the 15th century, the clerisy had moved from its earlier position (fairies don't exist and you're silly to think they do) to one which presaged the witchcraft trials (fairies do exist, and you're wicked if you like them).

And yet this opposition was all one way. The Church might denounce fairies, but we have it on the authority of the romances that fairies themselves were quite happy to go to Mass and swear by the Virgin. Nor were the boundaries between fairy enchantment and Latin learning as clear-cut as they might seem; Tiffany had been to college. Poetry knows no boundaries. Though romancers might be writing about Færie, or Avalon, or the Terrestrial Paradise, they drew on a common rhetoric of pleasant places. All these locations are cut from the same narrative cloth, and it is no surprise to find Morgan la Fée resident on the same mysterious island as the prophet Enoch.

Elf Queens and Holy Friars
Richard Firth Green

Gradually the literary elite woke up to these inconsistencies. Some began to construct a literary theory of the suspension of disbelief, the recognition that stories could be appreciated as stories, and not as if they were true. Some simply suppressed all those aspects of a tale which might prove embarrassing. In many romances, where the hero was said to have elfin blood, the later redactions simply edit out his fairy ethnicity – a sort of theological Aryanisation. Other writers followed the clerical lead, and retained all the supernatural elements in their stories but recast the fairies as demons.

None of this seems to have surprised ordinary believers, who could accommodate metaphysical inconsistencies without strain. They knew that a bridge as sharp as a sword connected two worlds, and did not mind if it spanned life and eternity, or the forest and the fairy castle. Who was it that heard that marvellous bird, whose singing made centuries pass by? In the earliest versions, it is a monk; in the later ones, a man entranced by fairy music.

So it's not just the case that ordinary men and women had a jolly time believing in fairies until those nasty priests came along and spoiled all the fun. Religious and secular story-telling were not so very distinct. And not all of the fun was so obvious at the time. What about people at the sharp end of elfin caprice, the ones who suffered strokes or had crippled changeling children? Might they not have welcomed a few friars sloshing holy water about, if it promised relief from their pain?

Jeremy Harte

★★★★★

Those crazy rhythms

‘Social jetlag’ is only one of the problems we experience when we – and other creatures, come to that – ignore our biological clock

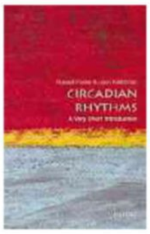
Circadian Rhythms

A Very Short Introduction

Russell G Foster & Leon Kreitzman

Oxford University Press 2017
Pd, 143pp, illus, bib, ind, £7.99, ISBN 9780198717683

Birds have them. Bees have them. I suspect that even fleas with doctorates would have them. As Foster and Kreitzman note, “Circadian rhythms are found in nearly every living thing on earth”. They control how sunflowers track the Sun. They influence the migration of butterflies and birds. And they modulate the timing of heart attacks, the accuracy of badminton serves and even how well some anti-cancer drugs, vaccinations and cholesterol-lowering medicines work.



Circadian rhythms – biological changes over the course of a day – allow organisms to synchronise their activities and behaviour with threats and opportunities in the environment, such as food availability, the risk of encountering predators and chances to mate. Cues such as light ‘entrain’ the body to follow the environment.

But almost every cell also has a timekeeper, controlled by a master clock in the brain (the suprachiasmatic nucleus), which is supplied with nerves from the eye. Without cues (such as living underground or during the Artic winter), our biological clocks maintain a circadian rhythm, though it is, on average, 24 hrs 10 mins. The cues fine-tune the pattern to the environment, resulting in, for example, our sleep-wake patterns.

We’ve recognised circadian rhythms for millennia. In the 4th century BC, Androsthenes of Thasos, one of Alexander the Great’s admirals, noted that the leaves of the tamarind tree curled and opened over the course of the day. Hippocrates and Galen recognised that fevers often follow a 24-hour pattern. However, scientists have only recently begun to understand the complex biological pathways that set the beat for these ubiquitous rhythms.

Foster and Kreitzman clearly describe our current understanding – and the unanswered questions. All clocks – mechanical or biological – must compensate for changes in temperature. The activity of most biological processes doubles with, within reason, each 10° increase in temperature. (You may remember this as the Q10 temperature co-efficient.) Circadian rhythms do not share this temperature dependence, though how they circumvent Q10 is not clear.

Such discussions are of more than just academic interest. As Foster and Kreitzman point out, “Being forced to live against one’s circadian clock” can damage your health. ‘Social jet lag’ refers to the difference between the time that alarm makes you crawl out of bed and your natural wake time. Every hour of social jet lag increases the risk of being obese or overweight by 30%.

In addition, true jet lag and sleep deprivation contribute to accidents, illness and poor physical performance. In one study, the more time zones a person who is prone to mental illness crossed, the greater their risk of being admitted to a psychiatric hospital. Even horses and bees suffer jet lag. Bees flown from France to New York went searching for nectar on Paris time – and discovered the flowers in the Big Apple had yet to open.

Circadian rhythms also help synchronise seasonal activity. Birds and butterflies migrate. Deciduous trees bloom and shed their leaves. Until recently, the seasons influenced human biology. Researchers have found “indications of annual cycles” in the composition of fat and blood, reproduction, immune activity, disease and death. The activity of about a quarter of our genes changes over the year: some are more active in winter; others in summer. Despite environmental and social changes (electric light, central heating and easy food availability – in the ‘developed’ world at least), the deeply entrenched annual cycles may still influence our biology or the likelihood of developing certain diseases.

Circadian Rhythms is an ideal companion to *Sleep*, another excellent book in the same series and co-authored by Foster. I have a pile of the Short Introductions and they are uniformly excellent: an ideal way to dip your toe in a topic and, being relatively cheap, allow you to decide whether invest in more expensive tomes. They’re well written by leaders in their area, thought-provoking and insightful – and *Circadian Rhythms* is no exception. Foster and Kreitzman delve into the molecular biology that underlies the circadian rhythms, but they do so clearly and gradually. So even if you’re not a biologist you’ll be able to follow the discussions. Yet thousands of years after Androsthenes considered the leaves of the tamarind tree and while we’ve made impressive progress, we still have much to learn about this enigmatic biological process.

Mark Greener

★★★★★

The Phantom Atlas

The Greatest Myths, Lies and Blunders on Maps

Edward Brooke-Hitching

Simon & Schuster 2016
Hb, 256pp, illus, bib, ind, £25.00, ISBN 9781471159459

Discrete chapters and illustrations from antique maps and travelogues make this ideal for charting your own voyage to 60 of the world’s imaginary places – islands, reefs and mountain ranges, along with a few mythical creatures such as the Patagonian Giants and sea monsters of the Carta Marina that cartographers described, then dropped upon realising they didn’t exist, though sometimes not for centuries. These phantom lands were often known but misidentified by positioning errors. Pepys Island in the South Atlantic, for example, was probably the Falklands. Others, such as Sannikov Island off Russia’s northern coast, pursued by Russian scientists in the early 20th century, could have been tricks of Fata Morgana, complex mirages. There was the belief that Korea and California were islands; that the southern Sahara was fringed by a mountain range; at the North Pole was a mountain; and that North America and Australia had vast inland seas. Amusing now, yet many died in pursuit of these blunders.

Then there are the liars and the fraudsters who conjured-up illusionary places for glory and profit. From the relatively harmless Benjamin Morrell, “the biggest liar of the Pacific”, who ‘found’ at least three imaginary islands, to the doyen of conniving fantasists, Gregor MacGregor, who dreamt up Poyais, a territory in South America to which he led hundreds of colonists having traded their assets for his worthless land grants and currency in 1823.

Did the CIA really use a hydrogen bomb to obliterate Bermeja Island, discovered in the Gulf of Mexico in the 16th century, so as to extend the United States economic zone and lay claim to the oil in that area, or did the purported landmass sink in an earthquake? And what of Sandy Island, northeast of Australia and west of Caledonia? The Google Maps satellite image shows an underwater feature corresponding to the shape of an

island on a UK Hydrographic Office chart in the same location, and yet Sandy Island is still undesignated. Perhaps not all these phantom lands are conceits of imagination and error.

Jerry Glover

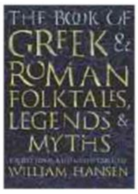
★★★★☆

The Book of Greek & Roman Folktales, Legends & Myths

William Hansen

Princeton University Press 2017
Hb, xxiv + 584pp, illus, bib, ind, £24.95, ISBN 9780691170152

Hansen's first favour to *FT* readers was his translation (1997) of Phlegon's *Book of Wonders*. More pertinent information came in *Ancient Greek Popular Literature* (1998), in which I played a small part. Since then, Hansen has produced *Ariadne's Thread* (2002), *Classical Mythology* (2005), and a host of concomitant articles, all catalogued with those of others by Adrienne Mayor (a warm Hansen fan, as were my *FT* reviews of her books on Ancient Warfare and the Amazons) in her *Bibliography in Folklore 111* (2000), 123–183 (online).



This volume revives, expands, and consolidates Hansen's works. After a prefatory setting-out of his ideological stall, Hansen presents annotated extracts from a huge range of classical authors, enlivened by 28 nifty illustrations from Glynnis Fawkes (a seasoned illustrator of archæological excavations), buttressed by a detailed list of the sources, glossary of technical terms, 31-page bibliography, a selective but serviceable index, and (especially welcome) a list of international stories.

Divided into nine chapters, each with wide-ranging specific categories, almost every page has rich (as one reviewer puts it) "cultural canapés". In Mayor's words, "William Hansen's marvellous treasury lets us experience for ourselves the timeless tales that made the ancient Greeks and Romans think, shudder, and laugh." Despite his frequent animadversions against "the thrice-cursed Greeks", I fancy its contents would have tickled Fort himself.

One suggestion. Hansen cannot find a Byzantine source for story that Hagia Sophia's inaugural congregation was terrified lest the dome fall down. Nor can I, but seems possible it was inspired by the descriptive poem of contemporary Paulus Silentiarius which states even its architect Anthemius feared it might collapse – as it did in AD 558.

The title misleadingly suggests this is yet another handbook of classical mythology. As Hansen insists, "the great majority of these stories are set not in the distant mythological past, but in the historical period, the so-called human era." This leads me to sharp ideological disagreement. Hansen has no patience with speculating over truth or falsehood, insisting "most traditional stories, regardless of genre, are historically untrue", going on to proclaim that "classical scholarship is unduly obsessed with this" and concluding "it is time to dispense with the oft-repeated article of faith that legends preserve a kernel of truth. Why should they?"

I say: Why shouldn't they? It has surely been many times proved, from James Frazer to Claude Lévi-Strauss, that they do. And Hansen's blanket condemnation involves dismissing the serious classical writers (Cicero, Tacitus, Herodotus, Thucydides etc) as credulous fools. This attitude now pervades classical scholarship. It's become an article of faith that any ancient statement should be doubted unless there is absolute proof of veracity. I cry the opposite in a wilderness. I may be overstating the case, but there is a case to be overstated.

These reservations do not detract from my admiration for Hansen's awe-inspiring erudition and industry. His book, an easy and endlessly rich way into human folklore (however you interpret that term), will be – in Horace's words on his own poetry – "a monument more lasting than bronze."

Barry Baldwin

★★★★★

Sisters of Tomorrow

The First Women of Science Fiction

Lisa Yaszek & Patrick B Sharp

Wesleyan University Pres 2016
Pb, 396pp, ilus, bib, ind, £29, ISBN 9780819576248

Early science fiction is often seen as a male affair; women such as authors Leigh Brackett and CL Moore, or artist Margaret Brundage, are well known, but the hundreds of other authors, artists, editors and journalists who contributed to the field during the pulp era are less celebrated. *Sisters of Tomorrow* collects work by more than two dozen women from between 1929 and 1950.

Yaszek and Sharp divide the chosen work into five categories: authors, poets, journalists, editors and artists, with short introductions and examples of writing or art by the women, together with short biographies of the creators. 'Authors' takes up about two-thirds of the book's length, with nine short stories. The other sections make for equally compelling reading, though, especially the journalism and editorial sections, which provide a fascinating image of a self-conscious fan community at a critical stage of its development.

Kathleen Ann Goonan's conclusion discusses the connection between these early female SF authors and the ongoing fight to secure and recognise women's role within the genre. She addresses recent incidents such as the battles over Hugo Award nominations that convulsed SF fandom between 2013 and 2016. *Sisters of Tomorrow* is a fascinating look at a group of writers whose work is often forgotten. The decision to include journalists, editors, artists and poets highlights the role of women not only in SF literature but, equally importantly, in the genre's community.

James Holloway

★★★★☆

The Theatre of Apparitions

Roger Ballen

Thames & Hudson (London)
HB, 192pp, photos, £24.95, ISBN 9780500544648

The Theatre of Apparitions is a collection of photographs invoking the apparent simplicity of cave art and the starkness of Lotte Reniger's shadow puppet animations.

Inspired by carvings in black-out paint Roger Ballen saw in a women's prison, the images are evocative but never neutral. The textures he achieves with spray paints and monochrome photography are often unsettling, for example the fibrous eyes and mouth in the photograph Breakthrough.

There is a visceral character to many of the photographs, particularly those in Act Three – Eros. The figures in various sexual positions look as if they've been rendered in bodily fluids. Yet in many of the images, faces with hollow eyes lurk at the edge looking in, observing, as if even at those moments a wider spirit world exists.

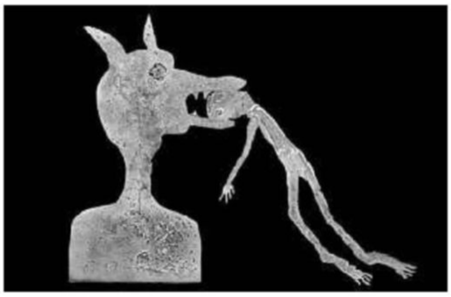
This spirit world is particularly apparent in Act six – Fragmentation, where the separation of 'the body' extends to the division of 'the spirit'.

I agree with Colin Rhodes's description of Ballen's images as a type of spirit drawing. Some evoke memories of kirlian photography, others of 19th century spirit photography.

The æsthetic in *The Theatre of Apparitions* is uncomfortable, and that's where its strength lies. The unsettling collection highlights shadowed places in the human psyche and in the wider world. Recommended.

Steve Toase

★★★★☆



Be prepared, and not just at dawn

FT readers may enjoy the chapter on HAARP and weaponising earthquakes, but the rest of the book is a one-sided look at a few decades' earthquake science rather than a new seismology

Earthquake Prediction

Dawn of the New Seismology

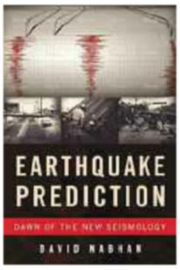
David Nabhan

Skyhorse Publishing Inc 2017
Hb, 240pp, $22.99 ISBN 9781510720978

Prediction is difficult – especially about the future. This remark was first made, not by Yogi Berra nor yet by Niels Bohr, but by the Danish cartoonist Robert Storm Petersen. It's certainly true about earthquakes. Yet the subject of earthquake prediction has a certain fascination, and there is a thriving subculture of amateur earthquake predictors squabbling, often quite viciously, about who has the better track record. Their methods are varied, but one perennial favourite is the position of the Sun and Moon, and the resulting tidal forces. This is the method favoured by science and science fiction author David Nabhan in *Earthquake Prediction*.

Do tidal forces affect the occurrence of earthquakes? I think it is certain that they do. The question is how much they accelerate the process. And here we come to that dangerous word, "triggering". To say that something triggers an earthquake is not to say that it causes one. It may be the case that tides trigger an earthquake next Tuesday that would otherwise have occurred next Friday. But this is not really very exciting. If a fault is not ready to break, no amount of triggering will set off an earthquake. How to tell that a fault is ready to go? That's the real problem.

The key to useful earthquake prediction is like this. Suppose you have identified some possible precursor X, which you think can be used to predict an earthquake. In any time period, there are four possible outcomes: (1) X is observed, quake happens; (2) X is not observed, no quake happens; (3) X is observed, no quake happens; (4) X is not observed, quake happens. For a system to be socially useful, you need as near as possible 100% outcomes of types 1 and 2. In the case of tidal triggering, obviously, type 3 outcomes will be very common.



Many earthquake prediction success stories, once you probe deeper, turn out to be concocted by making public a type 1 result and hiding all the type 3s. Nabhan mentions the celebrated story of the evacuation before the 1975 Haicheng earthquake, but not all the other evacuations that were ordered around the same time, before expected quakes that never happened; nor the disastrous type 4 result in 1976, when an unpredicted earthquake flattened Tangshan, killing around 250,000.

It is certainly not the case, as Nabhan suggests, that earthquake prediction has been a taboo career-killing subject for the last century. In the 1950s it was widely expected that breakthroughs would be imminent. But results have been so disappointing that most seismologists have rather given up hope; indeed, there is evidence now that there is no sort of X for which type 4 results can be avoided; thus the best you can hope for is a partial success rate.

Earthquake prediction is certainly a subject that is very interesting scientifically, but its social application is something else. If I predict a big earthquake to strike Los Angeles next Tuesday, what next? You can't evacuate the whole city. You can tell people to be aware, be prepared, but if they live in Los Angeles they should be doing that all the time. Credit to Nabhan, he understands this, and his final chapter on earthquake preparedness is excellent. But he is over-optimistic about being able to limit the need for care to specific time windows.

He makes much of his conclusion that six fatal earthquakes in South California occurred at dusk or dawn near a full moon. But this is a small sample, and an earthquake doesn't know if it is to be fatal or not. So let's take all earthquakes ≥ 5.5 M within five degree longitude of Los Angeles and north of the equator, since 1960 (about 400 events) and look at the times of occurrence. A very quick analysis suggests that there is a bias towards dawn events, but they occur at other times of day as well. To be precise, about a third of events occur between 4am and 8am local time (12.00–16.00 UTC), twice what you would expect from a random distribution. There's no peak around dusk. So relying on time windows of increased probability runs the risk of being surprised by an un-tidally-triggered earthquake at midnight.

Most seismologists would agree that the key to saving lives is to invest in better buildings, and encouraging general preparedness. I remember checking into a hotel in Japan and finding a flashlight clipped to the head of the bed. "Aha," I thought, "Here is a country that takes earthquakes seriously!" Comes an earthquake in the middle of the night, the electricity is out, you have to evacuate in total darkness, that little flashlight makes a big difference to your safety.

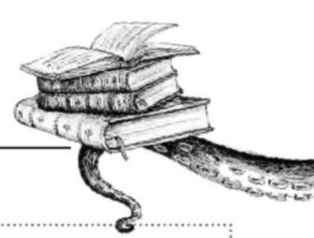
What Nabhan has written is not a bad book, and not a stupid one. He won't win any friends by calling it 'Dawn of the new seismology', when it mostly consists of a one-sided view of stuff that has been kicking around for the last 20–30 years. His writing is somewhat strident and slapdash – faults do not "explode", neither do they "erupt" – and I always feel that making assumptions about the nationality of your reader is a sign of amateurism. His research is a bit careless as well. I am delighted to read that Charles Davison (1858–1940, Birmingham schoolmaster) was one of the great seismologists of any era, though I may be the only person on the planet who would agree with him on that. Nevertheless, it is strange to read that what Davison thought about the 1923 Tokyo earthquake can only be imagined, when he published an entire book on the subject.

Of interest to *FT* readers will be the chapter on weaponising earthquakes; inevitably HAARP makes an appearance, and no, I don't believe it for a moment.

A more nuanced approach would have made for a better book, and it lacks the insights that can come from a professional engagement with the subject. The general reader will certainly learn a good deal from it, but as a popular guide to seismology I would rather recommend the books by Sue Hough (USGS), or (ahem!) my own contribution to the genre. Nabhan's book is heavy on self-promotion, so I think I'm justified in indulging in some myself.

Roger Musson

★★★☆☆



The SF and fantasy round-up

David V Barrett's suggestions for summer reading range from a magical tale of five privileged girls facing a revolution and an adolescent boy's experience of bullying to a new edition of *Utopia*

The Five Daughters of the Moon

Leena Likitalo

Tom Doherty/Tor 2017

Pb, 286pp, $17.99, ISBN 9780765395429

Chalk

Paul Cornell

Tom Doherty/Tor 2017

Pb, 265pp, US$17.99, ISBN 9780765390950

Norse Mythology

Neil Gaiman

Bloomsbury 2017

Hb, 279pp, £20.00, ISBN 9781408886816

Red Sister

Mark Lawrence

HarperVoyager 2017

Hb, 500pp, £14.99, ISBN 9780008152291

The Science of Game of Thrones

Helen Keen

Coronet 2016

Hb, 252pp, £16.99, ISBN 9781473632318

Paradise Lost

Pablo Auladell

Jonathan Cape 2016

Hb, 312pp, £20.00, ISBN 9781910702239

The Time Machine

HG Wells, ed Roger Luckhurst

Oxford 2017

Pb, 119pp, £5.99, ISBN 9780198707516

The Invisible Man

HG Wells, ed Matthew Beaumont

Oxford 2017

Pb, 143pp, £6.99, ISBN 9780198702672

The First Men in the Moon

HG Wells, ed Simon J James

Oxford 2017

Pb, 181pp, £8.99, ISBN 9780198705048

Utopia

Thomas More, plus China Miéville & Ursula K Le Guin

Verso 2016

Pb, 216pp, £8.99, ISBN 9781784787608

The Five Daughters of the Moon is the first in a rare breed of book, a duology – and I can't wait for the second one. Inspired by the 1917 Russian Revolution, the story is told in successive chapters by the five daughters of the Empress of the Moon, aged from six to 22. It's a fascinating narrative technique; they have different personalities and voices, and see events from different perspectives. And although they love each other as sisters, each finds at least one of the others irritating. Animal and bird souls are used to power magic – but early in the story the youngest daughters realise that their mother's senior advisor, shadier than any Rasputin, is using human souls to power his Great Thinking Machine. And how will the five daughters cope when the taken-for-granted luxury of their lives is threatened by revolution? Subtle magics thread through this beautifully-written novel from a Finnish writer, Leena Likitalo. And it has a gorgeous cover…

Paul Cornell's latest novel is a scream of pain from beginning to end. Andrew Waggoner is one of those boys destined to be bullied at school – and only a short way into the story the bullying goes horrifically beyond the normal. The Wiltshire countryside itself, the home of chalk figures, hears Andrew's outrage and creates Waggoner, a doppelgänger bent on vengeance. Usually he's by Andrew's side, unseen by others like an imaginary friend, but at times he takes his place with terrifying results. Sometimes fantasy, sometimes horror, but utterly real and rooted in the landscape, *Chalk* is a novel of painful adolescence; it isn't always pleasant, but it draws you in and holds you, and is one of the most powerful novels you'll read this year.

Retelling Norse myths is in vogue; I reviewed Joanne Harris's *Gospel of Loki* in **FT315**. Neil Gaiman has been caught up in the tales since childhood, and now they've found a distinctive new voice through him. The Norse gods are probably more human than any other pantheon, and Gaiman captures their tetchiness, their jealousies, their unreliability – and also the bonds of love and loyalty and honour that make them a force to be reckoned with. *Norse Mythology* is certainly on a par with Kevin Crossley-Holland and other classic versions. I'd have liked it to be twice the length!

Mark Lawrence's *Red Sister* takes a while to get going – the first couple of hundred pages and we're still on Day One – but once it does it becomes fascinating, more for its concept than for its story. Nine-year-old Nona is about to be hanged for attacking a professional fighter, the scion of a very wealthy and influential family, who was bullying her friend. She's rescued by the mother-superior of the Convent of Sweet Mercy, which trains girls to be fighters and killers, and discovers she has rare genetic abilities which set her apart from most of the other girls. Throughout the novel the family of the fighter she attacked as a child come after her, seeking to destroy her. There are some great set-piece scenes and some thrilling fights – one ordeal in particular is excruciating – but overall in a 500-page book I'd like a bit more story.

Alternative comedian Helen Keen will be familiar to many *FT* readers; she's spoken/performed at UnConvention in the past. *The Science of Game of Thrones* is a delightful tongue-in-cheek yet scientific exploration of some of the key ideas in the series, seeing what their real-life equivalents might be. Dragons? Well, Komodo dragons aren't quite as impressive, romantic or beautiful. Were pterosaurs any good at flying, and how did they take off? Keen looks at weapons and poisons and created languages, at skinchanging and giants and the reality of dire wolves. A somewhat left-field and fun companion to the series.

The graphic novel version of John Milton's *Paradise Lost* came out last year, but it's well worth a belated mention here. Pablo Auladell's art is a stunning piece of work which captures and reinterprets Milton's original. The text is minimal; the artwork is stylised, mostly monochrome or dull grey-green. Deeply thoughtful, eerily beautiful and quite astonishingly atmospheric. A new and startling way of appreciating a great allegorical work.

Finally, there are some very smart-looking new editions of SF classics. OUP have *The Time Machine*, *The Invisible Man* and *The First Men in the Moon*, with new introductions by Roger Luckhurst, Matthew Beaumont and Simon J James respectively. And if you don't already have a copy of Thomas More's *Utopia*, a new edition from Verso has a good introduction by China Miéville and fascinating essays by Ursula K Le Guin.

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Amazonians against the war

After three grimly dark and critically disastrous instalments in their 'DC Extended Universe', Warner Bros have finally delivered an enjoyable superhero film with some heart and humour

Wonder Woman

Dir Patty Jenkins, US 2017

On UK release

Nearly eight decades after her introduction, Wonder Woman has finally become the title character of her own cinematic adventure. Sculpted from clay by the queen of the Amazons, Hippolyta (Connie Nielsen), and brought to life by Zeus, the Amazonian princess Diana (Gal Gadot) grows up on the island of Themyscira as the only child among the warrior women. She is keen to learn the art of fighting, but her mother is anything but supportive of her daughter's passion, as she fears that should Diana learn what she is truly capable of it will draw the attention of Ares, the god of war, from whom the Amazons are hidden on the island paradise. World War I is raging in the outside world, however, and the Amazons soon find the conflict on their doorstep when American spy Steve Trevor (Chris Pine) crash-lands in the waters near Themyscira. As German troops follow hot on Trevor's heels, the Amazons are brutally exposed to the reality of human warfare, and Diana is compelled to join Steve in an effort to bring a conclusion to the War to End All Wars.

It manages to be a welcome reminder of the superhero films of yore

Since the inception of the DC Extended Universe (DCEU) – the DC Comics equivalent to Marvel's MCU – the films have failed to impress. With lukewarm reviews for *Man of Steel*, bad reviews for *Batman v Superman* and terrible reviews for *Suicide Squad*, many felt that all hope of saving this cinematic universe rested on the shoulders of Wonder Woman. Thankfully, those shoulders are both capable and strong, and director Patty Jenkins's effort breathes some much-needed life into the DCEU. Much like its predecessors, the film is a long one – two hours and 21 minutes – but the restrained editing means the film moves along smoothly without pointless meandering or frustrating leaps that distort the sense of continuity. The tone of the film also sets it apart from the rest of the DCEU: there is more joy, colour and hope here than has previously been brought to the table, especially by Zack Snyder. Thus, *Wonder Woman* not only establishes itself as a film with its own distinctive identity, it also manages to be a welcome reminder of superhero films of yore. This is particularly evident in Gadot's performance, which is refreshingly free from the angst-ridden self-doubt many took issue with in 2013's *Man of Steel*. Instead, Gadot's Wonder Woman has a personality, determination and sense of justice more akin to Christopher Reeve's Superman.

Although Gadot completely stole the show with her brief appearance in *Batman v Superman*, many were sceptical about her ability to fully evoke the strength and skill of Wonder Woman due to her slender frame. That scepticism proves quite unfounded, as Gadot's enthusiam shines through in her commitment to the action sequences, even if she doesn't really have the dramatic range to match her physicality. Her performance outside many of the action set pieces is therefore largely carried by her on-screen chemistry with Pine and the way his talent elevates what she lacks.

However, this also means that once Gadot is on her own against the villain in the finale, the film does lose some steam. This is not just down to Gadot, but rather a combination of her lack of range, a final showdown that's all too reminiscent of a dozen others, and the usual superhero movie problem of the underdeveloped villain. Throughout the film, the villainous characters are set up with the bare minimum of motivation and even less character development, making them the kind of superficial stock characters you suspect were selected from a mail order catalogue of pre-existing and interchangeable super-baddies.

With its classic structure of three clearly distinguishable acts and an organic sense of pacing, *Wonder Woman* will be a largely enjoyable experience for most viewers. The action set pieces are impressive and engaging, thanks to the spirited efforts of Gadot in particular, while the presence of the human characters in moments of battle makes you feel that something is at stake; everyone makes a contribution, even though they're fighting alongside a vastly superior demigoddess. With plenty of heart and just enough humour to avoid taking itself too seriously, this film seems to have corrected the course previously set for the DCEU, and while the final act stumbles due to a severe case of superhero showdown fatigue, *Wonder Woman* is largely the divinely fresh breath of air people have been hoping for.

Leyla Mikkelsen

★★★★☆

THE REVEREND'S REVIEW

FT's resident man of the cloth REVEREND PETER LAWS dons his dog collar and faces the flicks that Church forgot! (www.theflicksthatchurchforgot.com)

The Amityville Horror

Dir Stuart Rosenberg, US 1979

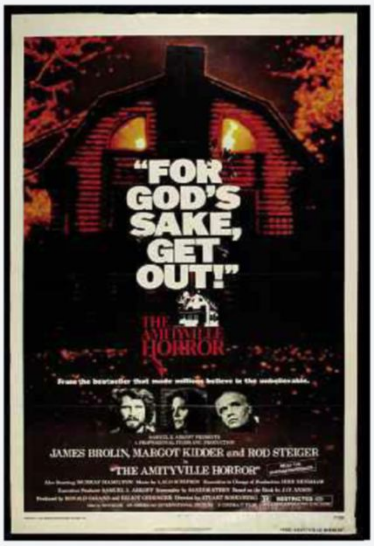
Second Sight, £17.99 (Steelbook limited edition)

It's always been fashionable for film critics to diss the original *Amityville Horror* movie. It was slated on its first release and modern writers have been equally scathing. A recent review from *Slant* magazine called the film "moronic", "boring" and "pathetic". What these critics fail to appreciate is the sheer cultural power of the story of the Lutz family fleeing their house on Ocean Drive. Perhaps it's because the paranormal shenanigans are anchored in a true crime tale of family murder (see **FT190:32-37**), or maybe it's because the activity is so darn varied and spectacular. Whatever the case, *Amityville* became a perfect cocktail of violence and spookery that even today, 38 years later, continues to haunt our culture, with 13 sequels, countless documentaries and biblical levels of writing and analysis both in print and online. It's true that by the late 1970s Jay Anson's book about the case was already a sensation, but it was this film that truly unleashed the flies and demon pigs across the globe.

Critics fail to appreciate the sheer cultural power of the story of the Lutz family

Now, yeah, if you want to look at it in pure movie terms there are issues. Some of the acting is way overcooked, for example. Rod Steiger has a fairly pointless role as a priest, but he makes up for his irrelevance with sheer volume: he wails and laments with angry toddler levels of intensity. Also the film has a habit of fast-tracking to melodrama. For a start, George Lutz (played by James Brolin) turns native just that little bit too quickly, and the babysitter has her breakdown too soon too. She's locked in the cupboard for all of 30 seconds, but she's screaming and splitting her knuckles as if she'd been in there for two weeks. Oh, and I did laugh at how any member of the clergy seemed to puke after a trip to the house. Put the hysteria aside, though, and there are some serious scares here – not least the voice that tells Steiger to "Gettttt Ouuuuut!" I wet my pants when I first heard that, and (amazingly) I nearly did so again when I watched it last night for the first time in years.

Key to the film's power is the Lalo Schifrin score, a masterclass in orchestral horror. The fact that he missed out on the Oscar makes *me* want to puke. Another crucial element is Margot Kidder. Her performance as Kathy Lutz brings a heartbreaking sense of sadness, desperation and sweetness to the role. I'm not surprised she received a Saturn award for it, because she's the heart of the movie. But the real fuel that has kept *Amityville* spooking us all these years is the story itself: a tale of modern mass murder followed by a rollercoaster level haunting. The big screen version could easily have screwed it up – indeed, many of the critics say the film did exactly that – but, for me, the proof is in the echoes the film has left. Say "Amityville" at a dinner party and just watch the shivers start, and for many (I'd say most) it's the *film* they're thinking of. Dismiss it all you like, but the original *Amityville Horror* is more than just a B-Movie and more than just horror shlock: it's what turned an intriguing news story into a bit of global paranormal lore. How delightful, then, to finally see it on Blu-ray in the UK, in a lovely-looking print with excellent extras (especially welcome is the generous inclusion of the full-length documentary *My Amityville Horror*, where the son of the Lutz family (now grown-up) explains to his counsellor that while the biggest legacy of that house may well be a mass market product but for him it's the memory of a real family, a very real house and, for him, an utterly real haunting.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THE AMITYVILLE HORROR
JAMES BROLIN, MARGOT KIDDER and ROD STEIGER
"THE AMITYVILLE HORROR"

My Cousin Rachel

Dir Roger Michell, UK/US 2017

On UK release

When Philip is orphaned as a young child, his cousin Ambrose becomes his guardian and a strong bond is formed. As the years go by, Ambrose begins to spend his winters abroad, and in Italy falls in love with their cousin Rachel (Rachel Weisz) and soon marries her. Shortly after the wedding, Ambrose dies, and once Rachel is due to arrive back in England, Philip (Sam Claflin) is determined to confront her about his suspicion that she orchestrated Ambrose's death. However, once Philip lays eyes on Rachel, he is taken aback by her beauty and soon becomes infatuated with her; he begins to reconsider his suspicions – but should he?

The new film adaptation of Daphne du Maurier's 1951 novel boasts an impressive yet subdued period-piece quality and high production values. Rachel Weisz is her usual compelling and competent self in her portrayal of the eponymous female lead, and Sam Claflin does his utmost to match her performance, ensuring that the chemistry between the two largely works and keeps the audience interested in their interactions.

However, while the film is well put together, there is not quite enough tension to keep viewers consistently engaged. Conveying the suspicions, doubts and misconceptions of Philip relies solely on Claflin's performance, with the accompanying cast adding little to challenge his point of view. One therefore wonders if a more seasoned actor as the male lead could potentially have added subtler nuances to the portrayal of the character, just as allowing the supporting characters to react to his behaviour more dramatically could have elevated this into a more gripping piece of cinema.

Leyla Mikkelsen

★★★☆☆

Phantasm 1-5

Dir Don Coscarelli/David Hartman, US 1979-2016

Arrow Video, £69.99 (Blu-ray)

Don Coscarelli's gloriously off-kilter *Phantasm* series comes to Blu-ray in a new spherical set.

The big selling points of this release are the 4K restoration of *Phantasm* and the UK debut of the latest (and final?) film in the series, *Phantasm: Ravager.*

Phantasm is an odd beast, but a compelling one. The film could be a meditation on love and loss, fear of death and growing old… or it could just be a mad little tale of space dwarves. Coscarelli wanted it to be oddball and scary, and it succeeds admirably at both. What is interesting in retrospect is that Angus Scrimm's superlatively terrifying monster mortician, the Tall Man, and his flying silver balls of death really don't feature that heavily.

The first film made unlikely heroes of ice cream man Reggie (Reggie Bannister) and Mike Pearson (A Michael Baldwin). *Phantasm II* (with James Le Gros taking over as Mike for one film) has a bigger budget, allowing for some fun explosive thrills, but loses the homemade charm of the original. In trying to impose a linear narrative, it takes away from the nightmarish atmosphere. That said, this is still an accomplished shocker, and the idea of the Tall Man blighting the towns he passes through is both delicious and well-realised.

Arguably, the series goes off the rails a little in the third instalment, *Lord of the Dead*. Coscarelli's directing is still strong, but a few too many characters are thrown into the mix (though Gloria Lynne Henry and Kevin Connors do excellent work with the pretty stereotypical roles they are given). There is still a lot to love, and it's good to have Mike's older brother Jodi (Bill Thornbury) back in the mix. Plus there's one heck of a cliff-hanger.

The fourth film, *Oblivion*, has a much lower budget than the previous two sequels, and makes use of extensive unused footage from the first film to pad out the running time. While this might seem a little cheap, at best these scenes are integrated in a genuinely effective and affecting way. Angus Scrimm also gets more to do than usual, which is definitely a good thing, and we're almost back to the dream-like atmosphere of the first film. The downbeat ending leaves things very open, though, and this was not the conclusion fans were looking for.

Which brings us to *Ravager*. For the first time it isn't Coscarelli directing, though David Hartman does a pretty decent job. The ambition far outstrips the budget, but it's nice that they try and give us the sort of epic conclusion we were promised back in the 90s that never materialised (look up Roger Avary's proposed final chapter). There are a few seriously fan-pleasing cameos and some likeable new characters, but the focus is still on Mike and Reggie. Scenes of Reggie in a hospital, apparently suffering from early onset dementia, echo Coscarelli's *Bubba Ho-Tep* and are just as touching. It might not be a perfect conclusion, but it is a very commendable effort.

Martin Parsons

★★★★☆

Paranoid

Dir Mark Tonderai & Kenny Glennan Gavin, UK 2016

Studiocanal, £14.99 (DVD)

Paranoid is a slightly left-field (but aren't they all?) crime drama that unfortunately promises more than it delivers. It starts well. Small children are happily playing in a playground when a man in a hoodie runs up to a mother, stabs her to death, and then runs away. She's a well-liked local GP; clues point to the killer being a young man who is suffering from mental illness, so when he turns up dead the case could all be over – but was his death suicide or murder?

The GP's murder is witnessed by Lucy Cannonbury (Lesley Sharp), a gentle Quaker who is into nature and alternative remedies. She's not very forthcoming to the police, but over the course of the series she forms a close bond with one of the detectives, Bobby Day (Robert Glenister). The supposed killer's psychiatrist, very seedy from his first appearance, turns out also to be not only the psychiatrist to the mother of a young detective, but also her lover – and, it later turns out, had been shrink (and more?) to our hippy Quaker.

As the police get into their investigation they start receiving unusual pictorial clues, and discover that someone has been visiting witnesses posing as a detective, and even removing evidence; they label him "the Ghost Detective". When the GP's former lover is found dead in his swimming pool in Germany, the case widens. Detective Day is sent over to liaise with his German counterparts, and it's soon revealed that a major drug company is involved in some way. So far it's all very intriguing.

Running through the whole series are two complex personal relationships, one, more or less irrelevant to the case, between two of the younger detectives, and the other, developing and confusing, between Detective Bobby Day and Lucy Cannonbury.

Clichéd shady characters abound. As well as the dodgy psychiatrist (Michael Maloney) who seems to have professional links and unprofessional relationships with half the other characters, there's also another weirdo, played by Kevin Doyle (a nice guy in *Downton Abbey*, but is otherwise always the creepy one with seriously unpleasant pastimes). A top man at the drugs company (Danny Huston) is, of course, cold and ruthless.

There's a lot about this series that's either unconvincing or annoying or both. Lead characters keep being astonished that all this action is going on in their sleepy little Northern town – but why does such an insignificant place have such a large CID department? Why is it led by a DI (Neil Stuke) who is arrogant, stupid and simply looking for a result, right or wrong? Why do the detectives make sexist remarks to and about each other that would get them disciplined in real life? This is 2017, after all, not a mix of *Life on Mars* and *Dalziel & Pascoe*. The relationship that develops during the investigation, between a detective and the main witness to the original murder, is completely unprofessional – as is another detective not revealing to the team that his mother was both a patient and a lover of one of the major suspects.

There's too much going on, and it's all a bit of a mess. The show needed a good script-editor; at times the writing is laboured, at times cringingly unreal. There are at least two sub-plots (or sets of characters) too many. We learn a couple of episodes in that the real villain behind the whole thing is a multinational drugs company, so stretching it out for eight episodes is rather too much.

Considering the number of star names, we deserved a lot more from this series. There's some fairly lazy casting. Neil Stuke's DI is little changed from his un-empathetic laddish character in the sitcom *Game On* 20 years ago, with a touch of his stroppy head clerk in *Silk*. You want someone creepy and sleazy? There's no one more typecast than Kevin Doyle (any number of kitchen sink dramas). And Lesley Sharp was clearly told: "Forget your cop role in *Scott & Bailey*; just play Alison, the kindly-but-damaged clairvoyant in *Afterlife*." But at least she's sympathetic and believable in her role, unlike some of the other characters. The relationship between two young detectives, played by Indira Varma (*Game of Thrones*) and Dino Fetscher, is unlikely from the start, and neither actor really convinces, while the German detective (Christiane Paul) seems more obsessed with sex and food than with solving crimes.

But the performance which richly deserves an award is Robert Glenister (*Hustle* and much more) as detective Bobby Day, whose initial panic attacks lead on through the series to a disintegrating personality and a full breakdown. His slow falling apart, not helped by his confusion at his on-off relationship with Lucy Cannonbury, is masterful, and agonising to watch.

Paranoid comes from the same production company as *Queer as Folk*, *New Street Law*, *Scott & Bailey* and *Last Tango in Halifax*. It's a shame that, despite its star cast, it doesn't quite hit the target. There are no subtitles – pretty poor in this day and age – and no extras at all.

David V Barrett

★★☆☆☆

SOUNDS PECULIAR

BRIAN J ROBB PRESENTS THE FORTEAN TIMES PODCAST COLUMN

As a medium, podcasts have been enjoying something of a boom over the past few years. The democratisation of quality media production through high-specification computer equipment has allowed a plethora of previously marginalised voices their own access to what were once quaintly called 'the airwaves'.

In the past, broadcasting (reaching a wide audience from a single source) was heavily regulated and controlled, mainly through frequency scarcity: only those authorised or licensed to have access to the airwaves were allowed to broadcast. In UK terms that, initially, meant the BBC, with commercial stations coming along in the 1960s.

In terms of radio, there have been amateurs since the invention of the medium, reaching a crescendo with the offshore 'pirate' pop stations of the 1960s that ultimately led to the BBC launching Radio 1. For the longest time, Radio 4 (or NPR in the US) has been the default home of quality 'spoken word' content, whether that was drama, current affairs, or documentary radio.

Now, anyone with a microphone and an iPad, laptop, or computer and the right software can produce a decent podcast and launch their work onto a waiting world. Not all of them are good, while many are far better than you might expect, sometimes surpassing the productions of 'legitimate' broadcasters like the BBC or NPR. When it comes to fortean topics, there are a host of podcasts out there, ranging from the polished and compelling to the amateurish and downright weird. SOUNDS PECULIAR is your insider guide to the best of the current podcasts dealing with fortean topics: all you have to do is sit back and listen...

BEST OF 2016 | iTunes
UNEXPLAINED

Podcast: **Unexplained (www.unexplainedpodcast.com/)**
Host: **Richard MacLean Smith**
Episode count: **28**
Format: **Solo voice, reading**
Established: **January 2016**
Frequency: **Bi-weekly**
Topics: **Mysterious real-life events that evade explanation**

Against a background of self-composed electronic music, Unexplained presenter Richard MacLean Smith tells stories of mysteries that have no easy explanation. He describes his podcast as "a show that explores the space between what we think of as real and what is not. Where the unknown and paranormal meets the most radical ideas in science today..." There are no answers here, just mysteries, explored in surprising detail given the podcast's tight running time, and the trim length makes for an easily digested regular listen. The lack of answers is part of the point, according to MacLean Smith: "Sometimes, when something is inexplicable, that mystery in itself can become the story. In many ways, it is often the lure of the mystery that keeps us coming back for more."

He puts his interest in weirdness down to childhood viewings of television shows such as *The Twilight Zone*, the oft-forgotten *Eerie, Indiana*, *The X-Files*, and especially the original *Twin Peaks*: he claims to "trace his fascination with the strange and mysterious directly back to the night his mum let him stay up to watch the pilot episode..." His podcast deals with far more troubling real-life mysteries.

MacLean Smith kicks things off in the first episode with a compelling treatment of the mysterious fate of 30-year-old Netta Fornario, an occult practitioner who died alone on the island of Iona in Scotland in 1929. He recounts how Netta, a member of a group spun-off from the Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn and dubbed 'Alpha et Omega', travelled to the island in search of a gateway to the land of faerie. She wandered from her lodgings in bad weather, only to be found two days later wearing only a thin black cloak, lying dead atop a cross carved into the grass with a dagger (which lay under her body).

It is often the lure of the mystery that keeps us coming back

The death of Netta Fornario was never solved, but MacLean Smith does run through some of the theories, including the possibility that she simply was not prepared for the harsh Scottish climate, with her official cause of death put down to 'exposure to the elements'. Alternatively, maybe she was searching for a way to journey to the 'world' beyond death and, in fact, succeeded in making the transition (MacLean Smith paints in a background for Netta that makes that plausible). Then there is the other explanation offered by her fellow occult fans: that her death came about due to an attack by a 'psychic telepath' who struck out at Netta from hundreds of miles away.

Later episodes broaden out to tackle the Heaven's Gate cult suicides, reincarnation, the Pontefract Poltergeist, the supernatural theories of 'Victorian ghostbuster' Sir William Barrett, the exorcism of Michael Taylor, a two-part exploration of the Dyatlov mountain mystery, a 1978 UFO encounter in Melbourne, the Hexham Heads mystery, timeslips, the Pollock reincarnation story, the real-life inspiration for the *The Exorcist*, and a live episode from the London Podcast Festival on the haunting of 1 Byron Street.

Some of the episodes have 'Extra' instalments that delve deeper into aspects of the story, one of the best being the 10th episode's additional podcast ('Who Aiwass'), exploring the mystical life of Aleister Crowley and following on from 'The Spaces That Linger', which focuses on Crowley's connection to Boleskine House, once owned by Led Zeppelin's Jimmy Page and recently burned down in a mysterious fire.

There is, perhaps, too strong a sense of each piece having been written, with the pseudo-literary prose coming across as a bit contrived in the reading. The music contributes much to the atmosphere, and MacLean Smith's avoidance of the more obvious subjects – Crowley aside – is to be welcomed. From the launch of Unexplained in 2016, the podcast has been streamed over four million times (hitting #2 in the iTunes chart, just behind Serial), proving that the human desire for mystery remains insatiable.

Strengths: **Richard MacLean Smith has a perfect voice for podcasts, and he makes the most of it in his presentation...**

Weaknesses: **...However, he does have a tendency to get 'deep' and philosophical, sometimes without much justification.**

Recommended Episodes: **S01E01 'Opening the Gate'; S01E05 'What Hides Beneath' (the K-219 incident); S02E01 'Whispers in the Trees' (the old wych elm tree skull); S02E02 'Time Out of Joint' (mysterious timeslips).**

Verdict: **Well produced and presented podcast exploring lesser-known mysteries, short enough not to devour your time.**

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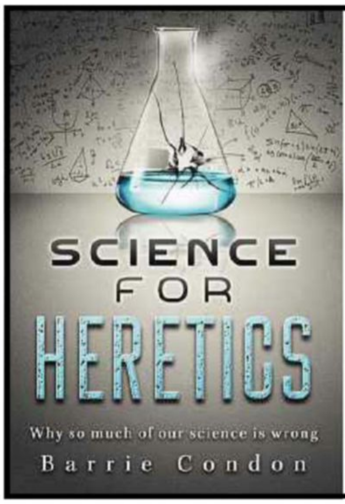
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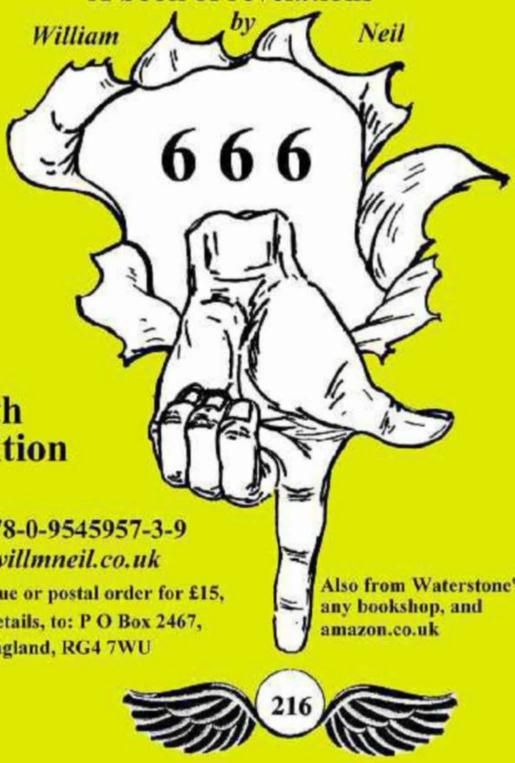

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LETTERS

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Simulacking

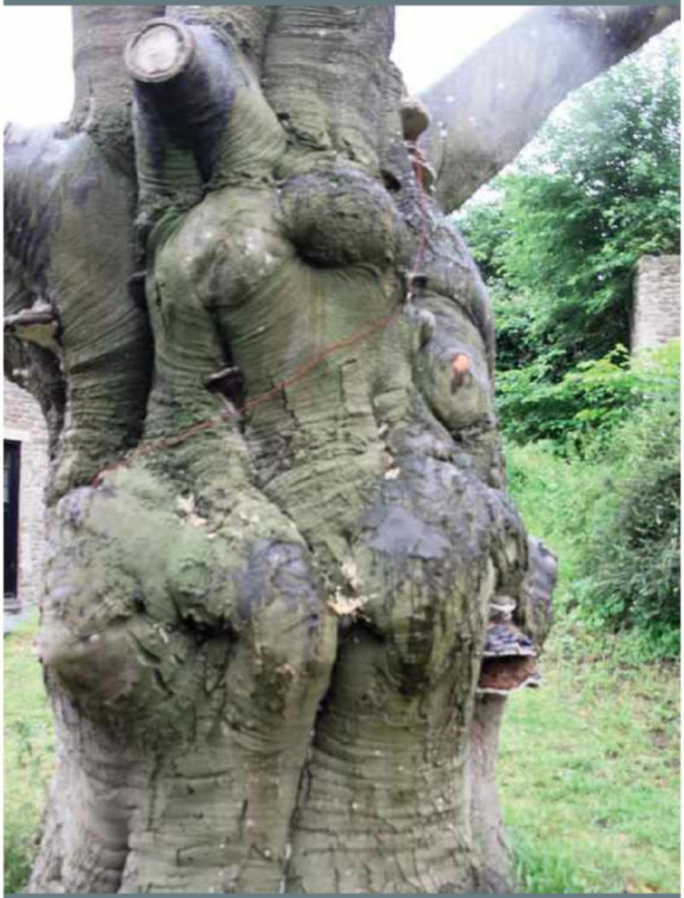
After many years of reading *Fortean Times* I have come to realise that my limited imagination must be the reason why I find one regular feature consistently underwhelming. I refer to the simulacra or pareidolia submitted by readers. Every month there are photographs of trees or rocks, which look to me like photographs of trees or rocks. I have grown accustomed to squinting at the pages and trying to be suitably impressed by the supposed 'spontaneous forms and figures' but the 'kindly light' photo [**FT353:76**] set a new standard in impenetrability. According to the caption, this image of a small child and a blob of light was a small child "looking directly at a figure of light that appears to have a halo, like a guardian angel".

Try as I might I failed to replicate this surprisingly specific interpretation. Is it possible that the original image was much clearer and the detail has been lost when printed in the magazine? Or could this interpretation only have been made by a doting parent who likes the idea of 'guardian angels'? Perhaps you could hold a new picture competition along the lines of: "Can anyone guess what the person who sent this in thinks it looks like?" I'm pretty sure that I'd never win.

Martin Stubbs
London

Editor's note: simulacra are of course in the eye of the beholder, but that eye can be inconsistent. Some photos received look like nothing other than the obvious on first viewing, while on later inspection appear as obvious simulacra. However, I agree with Mr Stubbs that the "kindly light" was hard to interpret as a figure with a halo. The original image was a bit clearer, on top of which the doting parent had probably been swayed by wishful thinking.

SIMULACRA CORNER



This odd seated figure (perhaps a woman wearing a gas mask?), sent to Fortean Towers by Mark Spurlock, adorned the trunk of a copper beech tree in the graveyard of St John's Church in Frome, Somerset. Known as the 'Tree of Souls' because of the bulges and twists in its trunk suggesting lost souls climbing heavenwards, the tree has now been felled, as it had long been attacked by ganoderma (white rot) and was deemed unsafe.

We are always glad to receive pictures of spontaneous forms and figures, or any curious images. Send them (with your postal address) to Fortean Times, PO Box 2409, London NW5 4NP or to sieveking@forteantimes.com.

Absurd assumptions

In the feature on April Fools [**FT352:28-33**], it is asked why we believe in such absurd things. Well, the answer is that in order for bad, absurd, crazy things to happen there must, paradoxically, be good reasons or else they would not happen. And our believing the absurd is just such a trust. Indeed the more absurd a suggestion the more we believe it, and so the more ground we make up to explain it, the more successful the explanation is.

Wait for a friend or relative to come in to a room where you are and as they enter, say to them, "You've forgotten to put on your trousers". The first thing they will do is look to see if it is true. But what is more absurd, your suggestion or their trust? Or is it one and the same thing?

Simon van Someren
London

Rumour and race

I think it is risible that Theo Paijmans continues to ascribe a neighbourhood folkloric bogey to mean old white people [**FT352:71**]. Were blacks of the 1930s so ignorant that they would simply accept at face value a monster story like that from an outsider, and employ no critical thinking whatsoever? I can't see that happening. Think about it: if some outsider from a culture highly antagonistic to your own who always behaved like a conniving bastard came up and told you there was a monster in the nearby woods, would you go flipping out and boarding up your house? I still maintain that such stories are far more likely to arise from within the community in question due to simple mischievous pranksters.

James Barnes
By email

Editor's note: Mr Barnes goes on at some length about how black people in the American South are today more racist than their white neighbours. This correspondence thread is now closed.

Wasp's trophy

The report of an Asian hornet found near Tetbury in Gloucestershire [**FT353:10**] states that this species is known to decapitate bees. This strikes a chord with something I witnessed some 30 years ago not 100 miles from Tetbury. I was on leave from training for the Airforce, so it must have been late Eighties. As a keen motorcyclist, I used my trail bike to explore the remoter roads and green lanes of Gloucestershire around Cheltenham. On one expedition I took a green lane that ran from Brockworth to the top of the Cotswolds escarpment known as the Green Way. Having parked up, I set out on foot to survey the route when I noticed a frantic buzzing being produced by a common honeybee and a wasp having what can only be described as a punch up. This took place on the ground and needless to say, the wasp won. As I watched for about 15 minutes, the wasp chewed or cut off the bee's legs followed by its head. It then flew off with the head – surely not to hang up as a trophy? The predator looked like an ordinary wasp to me. This has always puzzled me and I would love to know if such behaviour is rare or commonplace, and among which species.

Matt Chapman
By email

LETTERS

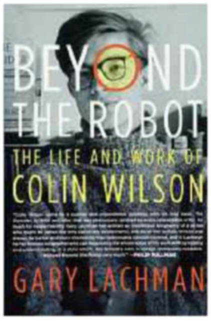
Called a genius

Many thanks for David Barrett's review of my latest book, *Beyond the Robot: The Life and Work of Colin Wilson*, [**FT353:60**]. I appreciate that you devote ample space to the book, but I would like to clarify some remarks that, I believe, may give a wrong impression.

The reviewer remarks that "aside from the early pages", most of the book is about Wilson's work, and hence is not really a biography, but more of a 'philosophy textbook'. Would that such textbooks had such philosophy! He does acknowledge that because Wilson wrote about ideas, this makes the book more about their development than his. Perhaps, although I do believe I follow Wilson's life fairly closely, linking the ideas he is grappling with to their expression in his life. I don't believe it is true that aside from charting his early years as a struggling wannabe before *The Outsider* threw him into a celebrity spotlight he never really wanted, there is nothing about his life. There is plenty about it. But Wilson himself would say that what is really important about a writer is what he says. As the majority of material written about Wilson ignores practically everything he wrote aside from *The Outsider*, I believe, as he did, that the books that followed, and which made up what he called 'the Outsider cycle', warrant serious consideration, and I was determined to give them that. As I say in the Introduction, my aim was to present an "introductory overview" of Wilson's life and work and to "make clear some of the basic ideas and aims of Wilson's philosophy" so that it may "prompt readers unfamiliar with his work to seek out his books and read them for themselves."

My reason for doing this, as the reviewer remarks, is because Wilson wrote an enormous amount about a wide range of different but related subjects. Yet all of his subjects are linked by a common theme, what Wilson calls "the paradoxical nature of freedom". My aim was to show how this common and, to my mind, absolutely important insight informs all his work. The reviewer's cursory assessment of this as "common sense" and his brief remarks about it suggests that in his case I failed.

The reviewer also suggests that I did not sufficiently question Wilson's assessment of himself as a 'genius'. Yet he seems to have missed several places in which I do just that, or at least question a 24-year-old's too frequent acknowledgement of it. So, on page 54, I write: "It was that word 'genius' that began to irritate the mostly modest reading public" and I suggest that the fact that "he himself breathed it somewhat injudiciously did not help". I also suggest that "Wilson's own inexperience and lack of guile also ensured that he would put his foot in it" (p.56) in interviews. There are other examples of my questioning as well. But then, reviewers like Cyril Connolly, Philip Toynbee, Edith Sitwell and others were themselves announcing Wilson's 'genius' to their readers from the moment *The Outsider* appeared. Who are we – or Wilson – to disagree? And do I consider him a 'genius'? Well, Wilson himself points out the difference between having genius and being one, and I have no doubt that he had it, and on more occasions than while writing *The Outsider*. I let the reader know up front that I am a 'fan' and that Wilson was a 'mentor' to me – and to many others who found in his work important and essential ideas about human existence and consciousness. But then the "totally brainless" English approach is very often to castigate anyone who believes in anything and to celebrate either mediocrity or the kind of cynical know-it-all pessimism that is forever fearful of any wool being pulled over its eyes. By the way, two other English thinkers I met and wrote about, Owen Barfield and Kathleen Raine, said exactly the same thing about the English, so perhaps this insight is not limited to Wilson.



The reviewer also points out that there is only one paragraph about Wilson's politics, mentioning his support for Thatcher. Yet he fails to mention that Wilson also wrote an open letter calling for her resignation. He also says that Wilson had views "much further to the right". That Wilson was labelled a 'fascist' by people like John Osborne, Kenneth Tynan and other fashionably left writers, solely because he was interested in existential concerns, not social ones, is simply name-calling. Wilson was not in the least interested in politics – in fact, he started his public career as an anarchist at Speaker's Corner – although, as I point out, some of his Angry Young friends, like the novelist Bill Hopkins, were. Wilson did edit a book called *Marx Refuted*, which included contributions by Karl Popper, Leszek Kolakowski, and Arthur Koestler, among others. Calling them 'far-right' is rather like called Tony Blair 'far-left'. I also say, on page 359, that Wilson "could show surprising political naiveté", à propos of a lunch he once had with Oswald Mosley. On the same page I have Wilson saying that he "always labelled myself a socialist", but he later came to reject socialism while writing a book about Shaw. But he has "been against the Tories all my life". With all this, I somehow can't find the views that the reviewer says were "much further to the right".

I can't agree that most readers would see "arrogance or blindness or both" about Wilson's confidence in his work. My experience and that of the readers of my book has been quite the opposite: in this we see the kind of self-belief that anyone attempting to do something out of the normal run of things must have in order to survive the kind of disparagement and sheer disdain that most often comes from being – dare I say it? – an 'outsider'. And what are we to think of a reviewer who thinks that all of what Wilson had to say about synchronicity – a phenomenon whose reality I am as convinced of as I am of anything else – came from one experience? That is simply not the case, and the reviewer misrepresents the incident in question egregiously.

The other supposed flaws in the book are, sadly, duly acknowledged. I would have liked to have had more room to discuss Wilson's fictions, although I do go into detail about his first novel *Ritual in the Dark* and do comment on *The Mind Parasites*, *The Philosopher's Stone*, and, at greater length, *The Black Room*. This lack must be chalked up to sheer space and time; the book is over 200,000 words (twice the word count allotted) and I was already far behind schedule by the time I delivered it. (Readers interested in an excellent study of Wilson's fictions should find *Novels to Some Purpose: The Fiction of Colin Wilson* by Nicolas Tredell.) And the index was the publisher's work. I did want to include a bibliography, but space and time again precluded that.

I should point out, though, that the reviewer's dismay about not being able to look up "key Wilsonian concepts like "Factor X" is perhaps more home-grown than he may think. Wilson does not write about 'Factor X' but 'Faculty X'. Such an obvious mistake from a reviewer whose tone throughout suggests a prejudice against Wilson's work, and whose review fails to do justice in any way to any of Wilson's ideas – a fate Wilson had to endure countless times during his life – suggests that he might have profited from grasping the key phenomenological insight – which Wilson spelled out in many ways in many books – about how our expectations can obscure what is right in front of us.

Gary Lachman
London

Up in the air

I was surprised that your resident classicist, Prof Baldwin, whose columns I thoroughly enjoy, should write [**FT347:57**] that

"Plato's 'Myth of Er'… has the hero's body mysteriously returned to his funeral pyre after his visit to the underworld with the souls of the departed." Plato's Greek irrefragably has the warrior's soul (*psychen*, in the accusative), not his material frame, embark on what was clearly a psychonautic journey. Diction aside, Plato's worldview would not even admit a corporeal ascent into the sky as the theory of the elements recognised only 'fire' (and, according to the Peripatetics, 'ether') in the heavens – not the 'earth', 'water' and 'air' of which our bodies are composed. Careless writing could hardly account for Dr Baldwin's slip, as teleportations – which are material by definition – formed the focus of the article. Er's body remained on the battlefield. As I argued in my article 'Three Ancient Reports of Near-Death Experiences: Bremmer Revisited', *Journal of Near-Death Studies*, 27.4 (2009), 223-253, the story of Er reads as a classic case of a near-death experience (NDE) – even if the elaborate cosmological vision contained in it spelled out the actual cosmology espoused by Plato and his mouthpiece Socrates.

I am all the more baffled because Prof Baldwin himself produced an excellent translation of *Timarion* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1984) – a Byzantine text which contains another striking report of an ancient near-death experience, describing even more graphically how the vision occurred during a coma while the body was wasted by dysentery and prolonged fasting. See **FT323:40-43** for some more adventurous musings about the nature of such cosmic visions.

Marinus van der Sluijs
Namyangju, South Korea

Barry Baldwin replies: I am grateful to Marinus for his graceful remarks about my Classical Columns. His point about 'Psychen' is a fair one. Nevertheless, if you toil through the notice of this word in Liddell & Scott's Greek Lexicon, many shades of meaning are recorded. In some cases, it appears that the word can virtually combine body and soul. The same is true of Christian and Byzantine Greek usage; cf. Lampe's Patristic Greek Lexicon. The souls behave in a physical way with (e.g.) their drinking – how, by the way, do souls imbibe?

Plato emphasises that Er's body remained uncorrupted 10 days after being killed in battle. Was anyone watching the pile of corpses day and night? Er himself had no idea what had happened to him. He could well be describing a physical experience in figurative soulful language.

*As to the Timarion – thanks again, Marinus, for your compliment – loath as I am to pass over my own productions, I left it out for spatial reasons. I may subjoin that I treated this whole subject at much greater length in **FT236:21**. It was also touched upon in my columns in **FT138:411**, **141:18**, **146-18**. I cheerfully admit Marinus is closer to Plato's wording, and may be closer to the truth. I can only end by saying that: To ER is Human…*

Mothman revealed?

Forteans remember the Mothman saga that began in November 1966 when two couples claimed they encountered a frightening winged entity while joyriding late one night through an abandoned munitions factory outside Point Pleasant, West Virginia. More than 100 people claimed to have seen Mothman during a 13-month period culminating in the collapse of the Silver Bridge on 15 December 1967, killing 47 people. Paranormal investigator and journalist John Keel chronicled this period of 'high strangeness' that also included a UFO flap and appearances of MIB in his book *The Mothman Prophecies*. Keel theorised Mothman was a harbinger of disaster, believing its eerie presence was a portent of the bridge's collapse.

Now an on-line blogger calling herself 'The Appalachian Lady' has come forward, claiming the real cause of the Silver Bridge collapse was a curse placed by Chief Cornstalk:

"I was the white man's friend. Many times I have saved the white man and his people from harm. I never made war with you except to protect our land. I refused at the peril of my own people to join your enemies in the red coats. I came to this fort as your friend, and you have murdered my young son, who harmed no one, and you have murdered me when I came only to save you. For this, may the curse of the Great Spirit rest upon this land and its inhabitants. May it be blighted by nature, and may it be blighted in its hopes. May the strength of its people be paralyzed by the stain of our blood."

The Appalachian Lady recalls her Shawnee grandmother telling her that the Ohio River Valley around Point Pleasant was the home to many Native American tribes including the Shawnee, whose leader (in the late 1700s) was Chief Kite-ug-gua, which translates as Cornstalk. According to the Appalachian Lady, Chief Cornstalk's curse on the land and its people summoned the wrath of the Great Spirit which lived atop the hills and mountains. The Thunderbird was a servant of the Great Spirit and is depicted on rock drawings that still exist today. These petroglyphs depict a "large bird-like creature with saucer-like eyes."

"So the Mothman wasn't a new thing at all," says The Appalachian Lady. "It was actually something known to Native Americans for hundreds if not thousands of years, long before the Mothman ever appeared." According to legend, it could cause wind and the sound of thunder with its wings and create lightning by blinking its huge eyes. Shapeshifting can be found throughout Native American myth and folklore and the Thunderbird was no exception. The Appalachian Lady says it could change its appearance to that of a man by pulling back its beak and removing its feathers. "It was a very dangerous and wrathful spirit, and its power could be summoned through the Great Spirit to avenge the Native Americans against their enemies", she added.

Pennsylvania writer Robert Lyman claims that Thunderbirds are not a thing of the past but are still with us today, living in the heavily forested Allegheny Plateau of north-central Pennsylvania. When interviewed in 1973, Lyman said that they live in the southern edge of the Black Forest, north of the Susquehenna River between Pine Creek and Kettle Creek.

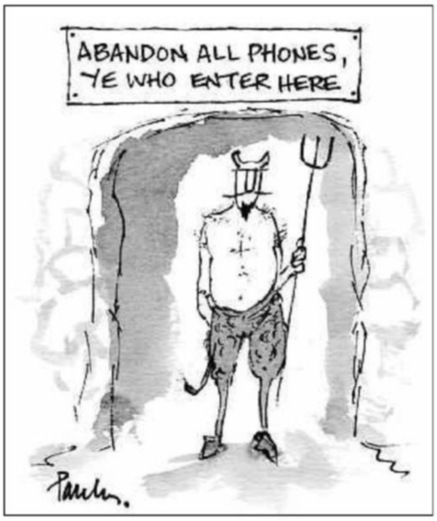
In 1969 the wife of Clinton County sheriff John Boyle saw an enormous bird land in the middle of Pine Creek that their cabin overlooked. The witness said that when it rose to fly "its wingspread appeared to be as wide as the streambed, which I would say was about 75 feet."

I think it's interesting – if not downright comical – that the subject of *The Mothman Prophecies* could have been the Thunderbird. For years forteans have been obsessed with the search for a photograph depicting the Thunderbird. Ivan T Sanderson claimed he once possessed a photocopy of the picture, but lost it when he lent it to someone, and Keel himself insisted he had seen it, saying it resembled a pterodactyl. Was forteana having a laugh at the expense of its own investigators?

Sources:

On The Path Of The Immortals by Thomas Horn and Cris Putnam (Defender Publishing. 2015. pp. 264-265); *Unexplained!* By Jerome Clark (Visible Ink Press. 1999. p. 511)

Greg May
Orlando, Florida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PAUL TAYLOR

IT HAPPENED TO ME...

First-hand accounts from *FT* readers and browsers of www.forteantimes.com

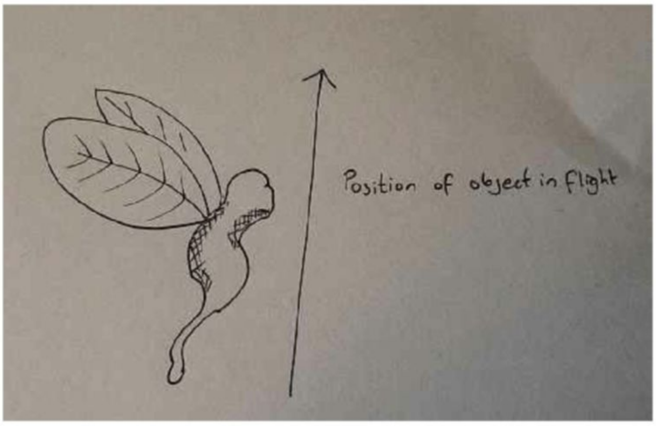
A selection of accounts collected by Rob Gandy at this year's Weird Weekend North (see p22).

Flying Fairy?

On 9 October 2016 around 6.20am, at the break of dawn, I saw something that looked like a dragonfly flying across a country lane, about 5ft (1.5m) off the ground and 10-20ft (3-6m) away from me. But its body was nothing like that of a dragonfly; it was about the size of a rat, but with wings. I drew a sketch of it and am happy that I got a good likeness. It is in flight, with the body hanging down and the wings out at the back; the black line shows the vertical position compared to how it flew (see sketch at right). It was the odd nature of the thing as it flew that interested me. I am familiar with the creatures you find around these parts in the morning, and it was definitely not a bird or a bat. It was something rather strange – perhaps it was some form of fairy.

Jim D

Warrington, Cheshire


Position of object in flight

"Its body was nothing like a dragonfly; it was the size of a rat"

Spock and Monty

One evening in 2008 I had gone to bed and had just switched off the light and was about to go to sleep. I stress that I had not fallen asleep by this point. I wondered where my 14-year-old black Burmese cat Spock was, given that he was often in the habit of coming into my room and jumping up on my bed. Sure enough, I soon heard a thud on the bed and felt the weight of him landing to my right-hand side, somewhere near my legs. "Where are you then?" I asked, reaching out to stroke him. However, my hand made no contact with a furry body as expected. I fumbled around in the dark and still couldn't locate him. I was so perplexed that I switched the light on to reveal... no cat.

About a minute later I heard the cat flap downstairs, and Spock came running upstairs into my room, and jumped on the bed in the same spot that the phantom or harbinger had just previously "landed".

The same sequence of events happened again the following night, and then again a few nights later. Finally the events were repeated one more time, approximately a year later; but sadly this time my cat Spock had died after an illness that came with old age. Seeing as he was alive during the first set of manifestations, I wondered if the "phantom" could have been some kind of future ghost or portent.

Another strange occurrence from 2010 also involved a cat. It was at my parents' home in Pembrokeshire, Wales. My parents were around the front of the house talking to the neighbours and the family cat, a large tabby called Monty, was with them. Access to the house is not straightforward: there is no front door as such, the main entrance into the house being via the conservatory, which is at the back of the house, and leads into the living room. I was sitting in the living room, reading, when suddenly Monty came in via the conservatory, running and meowing excitedly. He ran straight into the kitchen, where there is a back door with a cat flap. A moment later my parents came in, and I asked: "What's up with Monty? He just came running in here, seeming distressed."

My dad answered that he couldn't have done, as he had been out the front with them the whole time. He then went to the back door, into the garden, and called Monty, who then came from around the front where they said he had been.

Of course, Monty could have run into the house past me, and then out of the kitchen cat flap, and around the house back to my parents at the front; but my parents were adamant that he was with them the whole time. Also, such a circuit would have required him to have gone into the neighbours' garden through the hedge, around the side of their house, up their driveway, through their front gate, and run back down the road to the front of our house to re-join my parents; and they certainly would have noticed if he'd been racing around like a lunatic (as he was a big cat and not known for dashing around). It was either that or it was a doppelgänger cat (which was unlikely). I prefer to think it was a case of feline bilocation.

Gavin

Pembrokeshire, Wales

Flying downstairs

One day in the mid-1950s when I was about five years old, I "flew" down the stairs of our house. There were two or three stairs and then a 90-degree turn with a flat area, before the main staircase of about 10 steps, with another turn just before the bottom. I walked down to the first turn, and then from the flat area I drifted above the straight part and landed at the bottom of the stairs. As far as I recall I was upright, with my arms by my side; I don't recall any feeling of being lifted or rising up. It was a case of being at the top of the staircase and then being at the bottom without touching the stairs.

I remember thinking the experience was "different" and "interesting", but being a child I just accepted it. I simply landed at the bottom, still upright, without the effort of walking down. I have no idea how long it took, but I have always assumed it was about the same length of time as if I had walked down. I recollect that there was a sloping ceiling above the stairs, so I sometimes wonder how I didn't bump my head on it.

I then walked through the hall and into the kitchen where I informed my mum that I had just flown down the stairs. I don't think she believed me, but she didn't say I was making it up. It became a standing joke in the family: "Remember when Margaret flew downstairs?" I sometimes used to try and repeat it, but just stood at the top of the stairs without ever "taking off", and I never experienced it again. Whenever it was mentioned I would quietly think, "Well *I* know it happened".

About 20 years ago, I read in *The Encyclopaedia of the World's Greatest Unsolved Mysteries* by John and Anne Spencer of someone having something very similar happen to them: Lorraine Parry flew downstairs when she was five years old. She flew above her body, which she could see below her, walking downstairs holding onto the banister, and felt a slight jolt as she reconnected with it. The book categorised this as an out-of-body experience, but at last I had found confirmation that these sorts of things do happen – although I can't say I remember looking down on myself or reconnecting afterwards, I thought that the description was so similar it was uncanny.

Margaret
Irlam, Greater Manchester

Sounds and visions

I have experienced several unexplained incidents at my parents' three-bedroom house on the edge of Irlam, Salford. It is the middle of a row of three and was probably built in the 1980s or 1990s. The first incident occurred when we moved into the house in 2004. I was 11 and my younger sibling was five. One night when we went to bed we both noticed a strange glow above the closed bedroom door. The glow was greeny-white and triangular, about the size of a hand. It was definitely inside the room, above the doorframe, and glowed against the dark paint. We turned on the lights to see if there was anything on the wall that would account for the glow (such as a glow-in-the-dark sticker), but there was nothing there. Because we had just moved into the house we didn't have curtains up at the windows, but the glow could not have been due to moonlight or streetlight, because of the colour and shape. Eventually we fell asleep, but in the morning we checked the area of wall again; there was nothing there that could explain the glow. As far as I recall it never appeared again.

In October 2011 I was staying at my parents' house while they were away on holiday. I was alone in the house, and I recall it was around 11pm when I suddenly heard noises coming from upstairs. It sounded like a group of children running on bare wood in the top hallway. The hallway and the bedrooms were all carpeted and didn't make much noise when walked on; and the sounds were very different from those you hear when a house is settling. On the same night I also heard chairs moving in the kitchen, even though no one else was in the house. I decided to stay at a friend's for the rest of the weekend!

Rixie
Salford, Greater Manchester

TRENABIES
FAIRTRADE
GIFT SHOP

KEVIN GEORGE / ALAMY STOCK PHOTO

Meeting the Devil

In early November 2001 I was staying at the Ayre Hotel in Kirkwall, Orkney. I was on my own, and having eaten I decided to go for an evening walk, despite it being a wild and stormy night. I was walking along Albert Street (pictured above) towards St Magnus Cathedral, before it becomes Broad Street. It is one of Orkney's old flagstone roads where people and cars mingle. As I walked along the street there were a number of shops with their doorways lit up by both the streetlights and the shop displays. It was then that I glanced across the road and spotted a devil in one of the doorways. I was surprised to see anyone outside that night.

Its appearance was that of a red man, less than six feet in height, with dark hair in a widow's peak. It was dressed in red and black, but I am not sure if it wore a cloak or similar. There were definitely no horns. I looked down at the feet and noticed there were *hooves* instead of shoes at the bottom of the trousers. This reminded me of the old tale of St Dunstan and the Devil in which the Devil appears to the saint in the image of a girl, but gives away his identity when her skirt rises to show cloven hooves.

At the time I was sure I had just seen a devil and can remember thinking: "Well, it doesn't look like it's after me!" So I gave it no further thought and carried on walking.

Jim D
Warrington, Cheshire

A haunted house?

In 2009/10 my wife and I lived in the end terrace of a block of four houses in Rixton, and at the time we were the only people living in the block. The four appeared to be built around the shell of a much older building: while the outside was believed to be Victorian, early brickwork exposed in the lofts suggested a Georgian date.

One evening, I was stir-frying on the oven hob and looking towards the kitchen door, which led to the lit living room, no more than 5ft (1.5m) away. I watched the door-latch lift and the door open, and naturally assumed it was my wife, because we were the only two people in the house. But it wasn't her: she was upstairs and also heard the door-latch lifting and the door opening. She thought it was me opening the door.

Now, the door latch was stiff and if fastened could only be opened with your hand. For example, if you tried to open it by pushing the latch down with your elbow it would not open. I actually saw the latch lift, which is why I thought my wife was about to walk in. I subsequently tried to balance the latch to see if it could move, but short of pushing the door it would never move.

Later that year we heard birdsong in the living room around 9.00pm in the dead of winter. It sound like the birds were actually in the room! The birdsong sounded most like that of a pet bird, such as a budgie, but we could not say for certain. The sound just appeared in the room and carried on for less than a minute. Of course, we had a look around the house trying to find the source, but we only heard it in the living room, and nowhere else or even outside.

We might be forgiven for wondering if the house was "haunted", whatever that might mean. Certainly my wife didn't like being in the house alone. But, thanks to the nature of village life, we know a man who lived in the same house for decades and he insisted there had not had any similar experiences for over 60 years. (Neither had there been in the other houses in the block).

We later moved into the adjacent house which seemed a much more welcoming place.

Jim D
Warrington, Cheshire

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WHY FORTEAN?

FORTEAN TIMES is a monthly magazine of news, reviews and research on strange phenomena and experiences, curiosities, prodigies and portents. It was founded by Bob Rickard in 1973 to continue the work of Charles Fort (1874–1932).

Born of Dutch stock in Albany, New York, Fort spent many years researching scientific literature in the New York Public Library and the British Museum Library. He marshalled his evidence and set forth his philosophy in *The Book of the Damned* (1919), *New Lands* (1923), *Lo!* (1931), and *Wild Talents* (1932).

He was sceptical of scientific explanations, observing how scientists argued according to their own beliefs rather than the rules of evidence and that inconvenient data were ignored, suppressed, discredited or explained away. He criticised modern science for its reductionism, its attempts to define, divide and separate. Fort's dictum "One measures a circle beginning anywhere" expresses instead his philosophy of Continuity in which everything is in an intermediate and transient state between extremes.

He had ideas of the Universe-as-organism and the transient nature of all apparent phenomena, coined the term 'teleportation', and was perhaps the first to speculate that mysterious lights seen in the sky might be craft from outer space. However, he cut at the very roots of credulity: "I conceive of nothing, in religion, science or philosophy, that is more than the proper thing to wear, for a while."

Fort was by no means the first person to collect anomalies and oddities – such collections have abounded from Greece to China since ancient times. **Fortean Times** keeps alive this ancient task of dispassionate weird-watching, exploring the wild frontiers between the known and the unknown.

Besides being a journal of record, **FT** is also a forum for the discussion of observations and ideas, however absurd or unpopular, and maintains a position of benevolent scepticism towards both the orthodox and unorthodox.

FT toes no party line.

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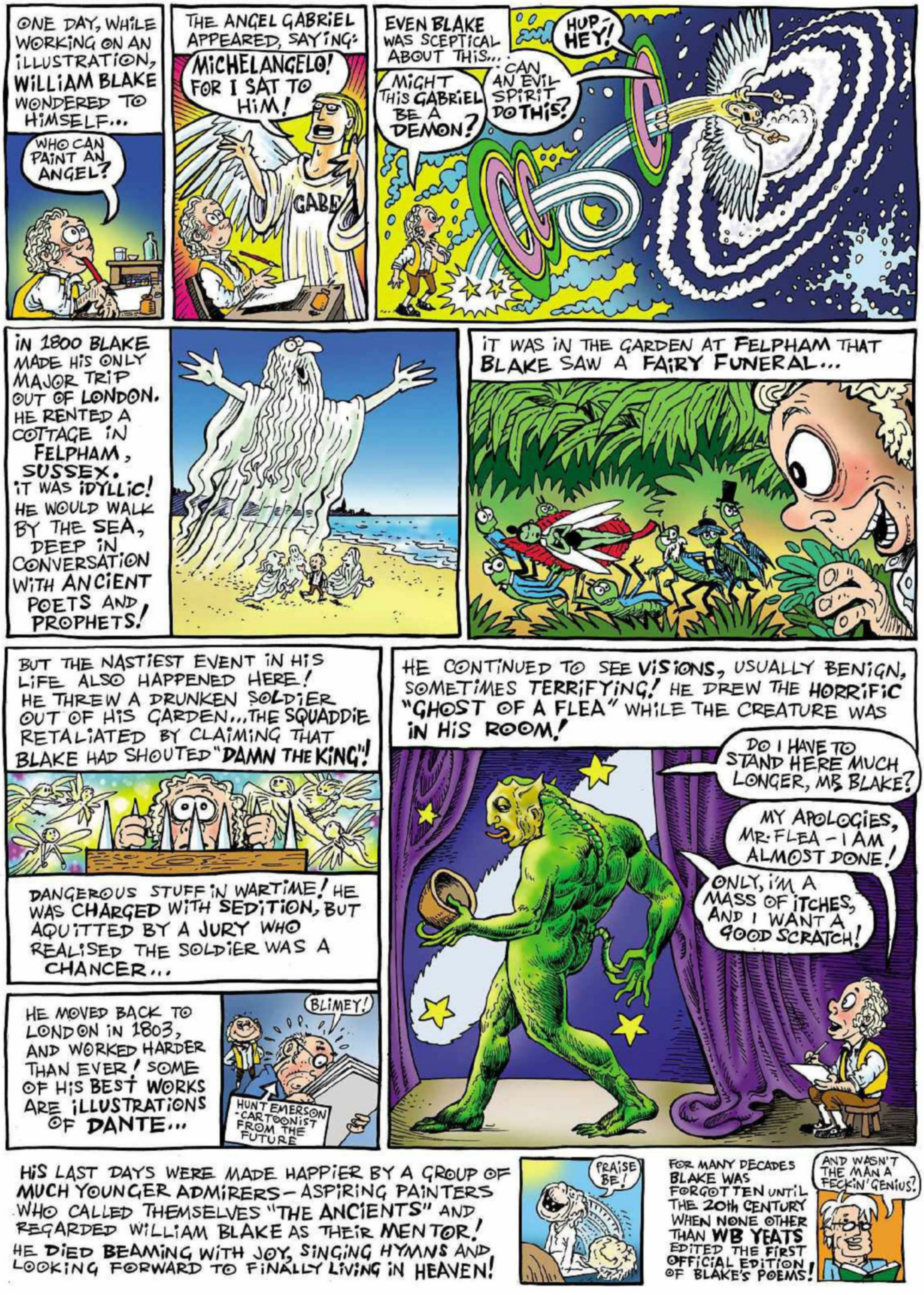
PHENOMENOMIX William Blake 3

HUNT EMERSON and KEVIN JACKSON


ONE DAY, WHILE WORKING ON AN ILLUSTRATION, WILLIAM BLAKE WONDERED TO HIMSELF...
WHO CAN PAINT AN ANGEL?
THE ANGEL GABRIEL APPEARED, SAYING:
MICHELANGELO! FOR I SAT TO HIM!
GABE
EVEN BLAKE WAS SCEPTICAL ABOUT THIS...
MIGHT THIS GABRIEL BE A DEMON?
CAN AN EVIL SPIRIT DO THIS?
HUP-HEY!
IN 1800 BLAKE MADE HIS ONLY MAJOR TRIP OUT OF LONDON. HE RENTED A COTTAGE IN FELPHAM, SUSSEX. IT WAS IDYLLIC! HE WOULD WALK BY THE SEA, DEEP IN CONVERSATION WITH ANCIENT POETS AND PROPHETS!
IT WAS IN THE GARDEN AT FELPHAM THAT BLAKE SAW A FAIRY FUNERAL...
BUT THE NASTIEST EVENT IN HIS LIFE ALSO HAPPENED HERE! HE THREW A DRUNKEN SOLDIER OUT OF HIS GARDEN... THE SQUADDIE RETALIATED BY CLAIMING THAT BLAKE HAD SHOUTED "DAMN THE KING"!
DANGEROUS STUFF IN WARTIME! HE WAS CHARGED WITH SEDITION, BUT AQUITTED BY A JURY WHO REALISED THE SOLDIER WAS A CHANCER...
HE CONTINUED TO SEE VISIONS, USUALLY BENIGN, SOMETIMES TERRIFYING! HE DREW THE HORRIFIC "GHOST OF A FLEA" WHILE THE CREATURE WAS IN HIS ROOM!
DO I HAVE TO STAND HERE MUCH LONGER, MR BLAKE?
MY APOLOGIES, MR. FLEA - I AM ALMOST DONE!
ONLY, I'M A MASS OF ITCHES, AND I WANT A GOOD SCRATCH!
HE MOVED BACK TO LONDON IN 1803, AND WORKED HARDER THAN EVER! SOME OF HIS BEST WORKS ARE ILLUSTRATIONS OF DANTE...
BLIMEY!
HUNT EMERSON -CARTOONIST FROM THE FUTURE
HIS LAST DAYS WERE MADE HAPPIER BY A GROUP OF MUCH YOUNGER ADMIRERS - ASPIRING PAINTERS WHO CALLED THEMSELVES "THE ANCIENTS" AND REGARDED WILLIAM BLAKE AS THEIR MENTOR! HE DIED BEAMING WITH JOY, SINGING HYMNS AND LOOKING FORWARD TO FINALLY LIVING IN HEAVEN!
PRAISE BE!
FOR MANY DECADES BLAKE WAS FORGOTTEN UNTIL THE 20th CENTURY WHEN NONE OTHER THAN WB YEATS EDITED THE FIRST OFFICIAL EDITION OF BLAKE'S POEMS!
AND WASN'T THE MAN A FECKIN' GENIUS?

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HOW SAN FRANCISCO'S SUMMER OF LOVE TURNED SOUR

TOWN OF A MAGIC DREAM

ARTHUR MACHEN AND BRAM STOKER IN WHITBY

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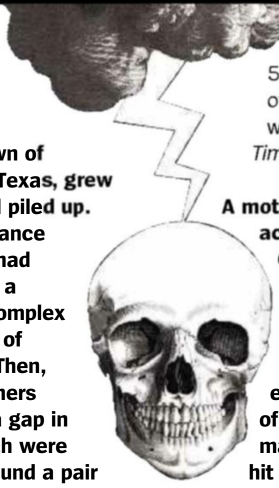
FORTEAN TIMES 356

ON SALE 20 JULY 2017

STRANGE DEATHS

UNUSUAL WAYS OF SHUFFLING OFF THIS MORTAL COIL



No one knew what had happened to 61-year-old Mary Cerruti, last seen in the spring of 2015. The lawn of her bungalow in Houston, Texas, grew wild; a window broke; mail piled up. The signs of her disappearance troubled neighbours, who had rallied behind her to resist a massive new apartment complex that had gobbled up much of the surrounding property. Then, on 4 March 2017, new owners moved in and discovered a gap in the attic wall, behind which were human bones. They also found a pair of red spectacles similar to those worn by Ms Cerruti. At the time of the report, authorities were trying to determine if the remains were those of Cerruti, which seemed very likely. *[AP] houstonchronicle.com, 6 Mar 2017.*

A suspected burglar died after getting trapped in the roof space of a chemist shop in West Yorkshire. His body was discovered by staff at Rowlands Pharmacy in Queensbury, near Bradford. It is thought the man removed roof tiles to get into the building and was asphyxiated when his clothing became caught. It appeared he had been there for several weeks. *BBC News, 23 Mar 2017.*

Twins found dead at the bottom of the White Cliffs of Dover on New Year's Day had rucksacks containing the ashes of their dead parents. Bernard and Muriel Burgess, 59, had lived with their mother in Flintshire until she died in 2014. The unmarried twins, who were said to be inseparable, then moved to Elton in Cheshire. Their bodies were found near that of 45-year-old Gulf War veteran Scott Enion from Manchester. A coroner recorded an open conclusion for the twins' death and one of suicide for Mr Enion. *Daily Post, 11 Jan; D.Telegraph, 22 Mar 2017.*

A customer who had been overcharged about 12 pence for noodles in Wuhan City, central China, on 18 February attacked a restaurateur with his own meat cleaver, cut off his head and threw it into a roadside rubbish bin. The victim was named as Mr Yao, 42, a divorced father of three. The suspect, Mr Hu, 22, was quickly arrested. He had had casual jobs around China since leaving his hometown in Sichuan province at the age of 16. His relatives, who had him committed to a psychiatric hospital at the end of last year, had lost touch. The suspect and two other men were charged 5 yuan (about 60p) for their bowls of noodles, instead of 4 yuan as was advertised, and a fight started. *Times, 20 Feb 2017.*

A motorcycle rider died in a freak accident in San Bernardino, California, on 11 April. Fabian Zepeda, 27, was decapitated when he drove into a wire stretched across a road from a snapped utility pole. Minutes earlier, a driver had lost control of a Ford Taurus, which hit a mailbox, ran across a lawn, and hit a wooden telephone pole that snapped in half, causing a wire to fall across Macy Street. *[AP] Los Angeles Times, 12 April 2017*

Fredzania 'Zanie' Thompson, 19, an aspiring model pregnant with her first child, was killed during a photoshoot in Navasota, Texas, on 10 March. She was standing between two sets of tracks when a train approached. She moved out of the way, but was unaware that another train was coming in the opposite direction on the other tracks, and she was struck down. It was her first ever photoshoot. *BBC News, 16 Mar; (Queensland) Courier Mail, 17 Mar 2017.*

Thanet Inwong, 36, was killed on 26 February when a bullet fired in a wedding procession hit him at his house in Ban Huay Khainao, near Chonburi in Thailand. Police found dozens of 11mm, 9mm and .38 calibre cartridge casings along the route of the procession, and a video confirmed that shooting in the air was taking place. *Thailvisa.com, 27 Feb 2017.*

Panupong Thanomslip, 32, from Chiang Mai in Thailand, died after his shotgun accidentally discharged on 18 February, shooting him in the right thigh, genitals, and lower abdomen. He was taken to hospital, where he died the following morning. Police presumed that he was trying to cock the barrel with his leg, causing the gun to discharge. *Coconuts.co, 21 Feb 2017.*

Theprit Palee, a popular 25-year-old medium, performed a traditional spirit dance in front of spectators in Chiang Mai in Thailand, on 24 April. The folk ritual is believed to honour the ghosts of ancestors and in previous shows the blade of the sword broke when it was pressed against his chest; but on this occasion the weapon failed to snap, causing Palee to stab himself. He died later in hospital. *Metro, 25 April 2017.*

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